Hafa Adai!

SUNDAY

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Do you intend to celebrate Valentine's Day this year?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

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Bedroom Makeover

I hate to admit it, but I have no love for my bedroom.

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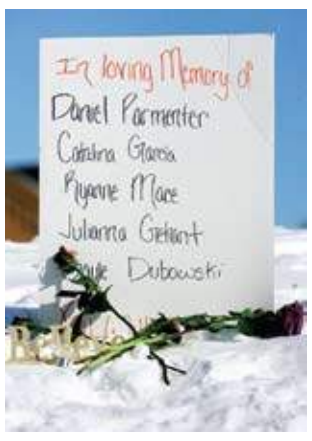

Illinois Shooting

If there is such a thing as a profile of a mass murderer, Steven Kazmierczak didn't fit it.

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Bizarre Twist

An attorney who claims to represent Britney Spears has filed papers to move her conservatorship case to federal court.

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ESGR seeking support for Guards and Reserves. **PAGE 5**

NMC told to submit special report

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

The Western Association of Schools & Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is asking the Northern Marianas College to submit a "special report" by March 15, 2008, showing resolution of the findings reported in the institution's most recent audit for FY 2006.

The March 15 report should provide the accrediting commission with information about what steps the college has taken to address each of the findings of the FY 2006 audit. The college should inform the commission of any increases in staffing assigned to business services, as well as changes to procedures in business operations.

See NMC'S on Page 4

Another estate probate draws allegations of fund's misuse

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Another estate probate is stirring some controvery after its administratrix resigned amid allegations of misuse of the estate's money and the proceedings dragging in court for over three years now.

According to court papers, Cynthia Attao withdrew as the administratrix of the Margarita Attao Duenas estate, citing poor health as reason for her desire to quit.

See JUDGE on Page 4

Inside the new US submarine world

By ERIC TALMADGE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Editor's Note: Guided-missile submarines are the U.S. Navy's newest twist on underwater warfare, and among its most secret weapons. An Associated Press reporter was given exclusive access to one sub's first voyage since its makeover. Here is his report.

ABOARD THE USS OHIO (AP)—Capt. Andy Hale has just worked out and is still in a sweaty T-shirt and shorts as he stands in the battle command center. He is watching a flat screen display that shows what's happening outside on the bow and the aft.

See MILITARY on Page 4

Crew members prepare on the USS *Ohio*, U.S. Navy's newest billion-dollar submarine before its maiden voyage off Guam Sunday, Feb. 3, 2008. Seen at left is a dry dock from which a small submersible is launched.
AP

Lt. Commander Al Ventura, USS *Ohio*'s executive officer, speaks to The Associated Press in front of Tomahawk guided missiles aboard the US Navy's newest billion-dollar submarine during its maiden voyage off Guam, Monday, Feb. 4, 2008. "The advanced capabilities that we have brought to this ship makes it a premier front-line submarine," said Ventura.
AP

Around the CNMI

Govt: 2007 a reflection of garment's demise

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

A garment industry on its death throes was the main reason why economic indicators in 2007 were down across the board, according to Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's press secretary Charles P. Reyes.

"The governor said this is a reflection of the demise of the CNMI garment industry. The garment industry was the CNMI's second major industry, which at one point even surpassed the CNMI tourism industry in revenues. Previously, the CNMI had two economic legs to stand on, garments and tourism. Now it essentially only has one," said Reyes in an e-mail to the Saipan Tribune.

The Department of Commerce released its 4th Economic Indicator Report last Thursday, and it showed that 2007 was one of the worst years in the history of the islands' economy.

Business gross revenue, for instance, dropped 8.6 percent last year to $1.67 million from the $1.82 million recorded in 2006.

The figure was the lowest since 2002 when revenue generated by all private companies in the Commonwealth totaled $1.86 million.

Government expenditure, meanwhile, had its lowest total in five years as the public sector spent 16.8 percent less in 2007—down to $162.7 million from the $195.6 million in 2006. The drop in government revenues was partly brought about by the 15.10-percent drop in the general fund (taxes and fees collected by the government), which decreased to $163.03 million last year from $192.3 million in 2006.

Imports and exports also experienced historic lows last year. Imports dropped 18.6 percent to $439.4 million in 2007, compared to $540.2 million in 2006.

With four more garment factories closing shop in 2007, exports continued its sharp decline in 2007, falling by an astronomical 36 percent to $307.5 million from $486.5 million in 2006.

Building permits, a good indicator of activity in the construction industry, was not spared as it showed a 12-percent drop in 2007 to 255 permits issued out, compared to the 292 permits in 2006.

HOT PEPPER FESTIVAL
The Tinian Hot Pepper Festival was held this weekend at Tachogna Beach. Other photo shows Sen. Maria Pangelinan and daughter, Lynn at one of the booths during this weekend's Hot Pepper Festival on Tinian. Tinian is home to the donne sali, known for its intense "heat."
JANET KING

CO Micronesia top performer in 2007

HAGÅTÑA, Guam—Continental Micronesia has once again placed among the top performers when compared to the Department of Transportation's report of operations performance of national carriers. The airline announced Friday that it ranked in the top three on on-time performance and placed first in handling baggage. CMI's rankings exceed DOT's national average of leading air carriers' performance.

The DOT rates U.S. airlines' on-time performance each month and publishes a report highlighting their findings. On-time results are based on flights arriving within 14 minutes of their scheduled arrival time. Year-end results show Continental Micronesia's arrivals on-time at 89.3 percent, beating 18 other airlines for a top three finish and exceeding the national DOT average by 16 percentage points.

Continental Micronesia also achieved an outstanding mishandled baggage ratio of 1.71 per 1,000 passengers, beating all other airlines surveyed by DOT. DOT's MBR national average of 21 national carriers is 7.63 per 1,000 passengers. CMI also exceeded its other operational goals for 2007, including a mileage completion factor of 99.6 percent.

The airline's 2007 performance was also an improvement over its 2006 operational metrics.

"By focusing on the key elements of safety, security, reliability, and service, we continue to deliver an outstanding world class product to our important customers here in Micronesia and the many tourists that visit our region. In 2007, we paid our employees $100 bonuses each time they beat performance goals. The result is our customers win and our employees win," said CMI CEO and president Mark Erwin.

The airline paid more than $700,000 in on-time performance bonuses to its employees for 2007.

"2007 was an outstanding year for both Continental Micronesia and Continental Airlines, and it shows in our profit sharing payout of $158 million. Our employees are committed to excellent customer service and ensuring we get our customers to their final destination on time," said Erwin. "For 40 years we've built a solid reputation as a first-rate airline in the region, giving our customers a world class service experience."

Continental Micronesia is headquartered in Guam and operates a Pacific hub from the A.B. Won Pat International Airport. A wholly owned subsidiary of Continental Airlines, Continental Micronesia employs 1,500 men and women and offers more than 236 departures each week between 23 cities throughout the Pacific Rim, the Micronesian Islands and Hawaii with a fleet of 13 next-generation Boeing 737 narrowbody and 767 widebody aircraft. In addition, Continental Micronesia and its code share partner Cape Air operate 86 weekly commuter service flights between Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. ***(Continental)***

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DPS honors bomb disposal chief

Team responsible for disposal of over 10,000 explosives

The Department of Public Safety honored Friday the outgoing chief of the U.S. Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marianas-Guam, a team that was responsible for the safe disposal of over 10,000 explosive items found in the CNMI.

DPS Commissioner Rebecca M. Warfield handed a certificate of appreciation to Lt. Troy Lawson, the officer-in-charge of EOD Marianas-Guam.

Lawson will be reassigned to Miami, Florida, and will no longer be chief of EOD in the Marianas region.

Lawson served as officer-in-charge of EOD Detachment Marianas since December 2006.

Warfield said that during his term, Lawson and his team responded eight times to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to safely recover and dispose of dangerous World War II unexploded ordnance.

This resulted in the safe disposal of over 10,000 ordnance and commercial explosive items, Warfield said.

The commissioner said Lawson and his team have significantly contributed to the increased safety in communities.

"Lt. Lawson's professionalism, flexibility and enthusiastic approach were instrumental in the detailed and effective training of DPS Explosive Response Team," she said.

Warfield said Lawson's technical expertise, poise, dedication and exceptional instructor capabilities greatly enhanced the operational readiness of XRT and DPS when he periodically served as the primary explosive advisor.

"Your performance during this period was outstanding in every aspect. It reflected great credit on you as an individual and your command," she told the officer. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Beautify CNMI looking for award nominations

The Committee Chairs of Beautify CNMI are seeking nominations for their annual Beautify CNMI Steward and Beautify CNMI Champion awards. The two awards will be given out at the annual Beautify CNMI anniversary dinner to take place on March 27.

The awards are given out to recognize the individuals or groups who have been environmental leaders during the past 12 months.

There are two award categories, the Environmental Steward and the Environmental Champion.

The Environmental Steward award recognizes a person or group that leads the community in activities that help protect our environment in a variety of ways. This individual or group has demonstrated the need to take pride in our islands and to take care of the place we all call home. They serve as an example for others, especially the next generation, to follow.

The Environmental Champion award recognizes a person or group that exemplifies the Beautify CNMI spirit. Those qualities include volunteerism, cooperation, innovation, creativity and the ability to infect others with the Beauty Virus. The Environmental Champion is a role model for others to follow. They bring environmental issues to the forefront of public consciousness. They make things happen and effect change.

Last year's Environmental Champion winners were PSS teacher Bree Reynolds, MINA board member Kathy Yuknavage, and local activist Captain Carl Brachear. The winners of the Environmental Steward award were elementary school student Adam Sablan and volunteer group Friends of the Mariana Islands.

To nominate an individual or group, submit a written nomination explaining why that person or group deserves recognition. You can make as many nominations as you like, but individuals and groups can only be nominated for one award category. Nominations must include the award category the nominee is being considered for, a well written argument detailing the reasons why this nominee should be considered, and contact information for the nominee and for the person making the nomination.

Send nominations to Angelo Villagomez at angelovillagomez@gmail.com or mail them to PO BOX 505149; Saipan, MP 96950 or call the PTI sponsored Beautify CNMI volunteer line at 285-6462 for more information. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

(Tuesday, February 5th, 2008)—The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) provides advanced Public Notice of scheduled Public Hearings for the purpose of accepting written and verbal comments on proposed action to make emergency electric-fuel rate increases permanent regulations. As is permissible in Public Law 15-94, under Section 2, "The Electric-Fuel Rates may fluctuate depending on the actual cost of fuel."

Proposal Summary and Background
On November 2, 2007 Emergency Regulations were promulgated to adjust the utility rate structure to allow the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to recover a portion of the costs it is charged by big oil companies for diesel and lube oils. The cost-recovery or fluctuating fuel costs are allowable under Section 2 of Public Law 15-94.

The adjustment, however, did not allow full cost-recovery for the utility's residential customers. This created a funding shortfall which led to the need for a Declaration of a State of Disaster Emergency, which remains in effect. (Executive Order 2007-11, Executive Order 2008-1, Executive Order 2008-2).

On January 31, 2008, the CUC published Proposed Amendments to the Electric Service Regulations in a Supplemental Commonwealth Register (Volume 30 No. 01). The proposal is to make the emergency electric-fuel rate increases permanent regulations. Copies of the Proposed Amendments to the Electric Service Regulations are available at the CUC or the Office of Attorney General. As written in the January 31, 2008, Supplemental Commonwealth Register, CUC has given thirty (30) days notice of its intent to adopt the regulations as permanent pursuant to 1 CMC § 9104(a) and to hold public hearings on the proposed regulations in each senatorial district pursuant to 4 CMC § 8142, as amended by Executive Order 2006-4.

The CUC will hold Public Hearings within each of the CNMI senatorial districts as follows:

Tuesday, February 19, 2008	**1:00 p.m.**	**Tinian** **Tinian Court House, San Jose**
Wednesday, February 20, 2008	**1:00 p.m.**	**Saipan** **Multi-Purpose Center**
Thursday, February 21, 2008	**1:00 p.m.**	**Rota** **Rota Court House**

Customer comments are encouraged now through February 29th, 2008. Please write comments or a letter to the CUC Executive Director, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950; or, via facsimile to: (670) 235-5131; or, via e-mail: betty@cucgov.net

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
1211 CAPITOL HILL ROAD
P.O. BOX 5150, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL. NOS. (670) 322-4363/6954 • FAX NO. (670) 322-3327

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC §8113, the Civil Service Commission hereby gives notice that the Board will meet on February 21, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Civil Service Commission Conference Room, 1211 Capitol Hill Road, Capitol Hill, Saipan. The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Seating of new Commission Members**
4. **Election of Officers**
5. **Adoption of Minutes**
6. **Executive Directors Report**
7. **Legal Counsel Report**
   a. P.L. No. 15-43 Boards and Commissions Reform Act of 2006
   b. Cases to be scheduled for hearing
8. **Old Business**
   a. Adoption of amendments to Personnel Service Rules and Regulations
9. **New Business**
   a. House Bill No. 15-122
   b. Renumbering of Personnel Service System Rules and Regulations
   c. P.L. No. 15-119
9. **Announcements**
10. **Adjourn**

Daniel N. Nielsen Felix R. Fitial Alicia T. Odoshi

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NMC's special report due in mid-March

From Page 1

The report should also include copies of all policies and procedure manuals changed in response to the audit findings. NMC is also advised that the commission will need to receive the FY 2007 audit as soon as it is available.

A separate report, NMC's Show-Cause Report, due Oct. 15, 2008, is expected to demonstrate that the institution has resolved the recommendations and concerns as identified by the 2000 and 2006 visiting teams, specifically as follows:

■ The college should review existing planning processes in order to establish and implement a shared vision for the future of the college.

■ That the college institutionalized a coordinated, systematic process for evaluating program effectiveness.

■ That NMC complete the cycle of developing, measuring, analyzing, and discussing student learning outcomes, and acting on the findings, as part of a continuous effort of improvement.

■ NMC should implement the employee evaluation processes that are in place in a timely and formal manner in order to assure the effectiveness of its human resources and encourage improvement. NMC should pursue funding to renovate or replace aging buildings with facilities that are appropriate to meet the current and future needs of the college.

"In every recommendation we have made very substantial progress and we will continue to do so," NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez said.

NMC said that it is their full intention to come into full compliance and to maintain full compliance.

Military shows off latest in submarine tech

From Page 1

His billion-dollar submarine—the U.S. Navy's newest twist on underwater warfare—is hovering just below the surface off the Pacific island of Guam as a submersible disappears into the dark waters, carrying a team of commandos.

The *Ohio* is the first of a new class of submarine created in a conversion from 1970s vessels by trading nuclear-tipped ICBMs for conventional cruise missiles and a contingent of commandos ready to be launched onto virtually any shore through rejiggered missile tubes—against conventional forces or terrorists.

The sub's cruise across the Pacific comes as China builds its submarine fleet into the region's largest as part of the bulking up of its military. The voyage is the *Ohio*'s first deployment since the makeover, and Hale is in the odd position of showing the ship off.

It's odd because the sub is all about stealth.

Hale can't talk about where the ship is going. The back of the ship, where the nuclear power plant is located, is off limits. The leader of the SEAL commando contingent aboard can't be named, and the commandos themselves can't be photographed in any way that shows their faces.

But, over the next few months, the *Ohio* will be making a very public statement, training intensively in some of the world's most crowded and contested waters and joining in exercises with America's Asian allies. Instead of hiding them, the *Ohio* will be showcasing its abilities to elude detection and operate too deeply and quickly to be tracked.

Then it will likely do what it does best—vanish.

"Submarines are the original stealth platform," Hale told The Associated Press, the only media allowed on board. "Submarine forces have always viewed the Pacific as a very important strategic area ... it's certainly grown in importance in the last 10 years."

Just about every country with a coastline in Asia wants or has subs.

China, Japan, Australia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Singapore, Bangladesh and South and North Korea either now have or are planning to acquire them.

Most don't pose much of a threat to the more advanced American fleet. But that is changing.

While Russia continues to be a factor, China now has the biggest submarine fleet in the region, with nearly 60. The U.S. has upped its presence in the Pacific, and now has more ships—and more subs—in this part of the world than in the Atlantic.

But they are still outnumbered.

"There are many challenges in the Pacific," Hale said. "China is certainly one of them, but it is not the only one."

China's subs are mainly diesel-powered, meaning they must come up for air more frequently than U.S. nuclear-powered vessels, and their crews are not believed to be as well trained as American submariners, who spend several months at a time at sea.

China's fleet is also highly focused on patrolling its own coastal waters and on dealing with potential hostilities over Taiwan, rather than with "projecting force," or trying to control faraway shipping lanes.

But its the long-term goals remain opaque.

Two years ago, a Chinese sub shocked the U.S. Navy by surfacing within torpedo range of the USS *Kitty Hawk* aircraft carrier near the Japanese island of Okinawa. Beijing claimed the sub was in international waters and was not "stalking" the carrier, which was taking part in a naval exercise.

The growing rivalry was underscored in November, when Beijing refused a scheduled port call by the *Kitty Hawk*'s battle group to Hong Kong, forcing thousands of sailors to spend Thanksgiving at sea. In January, however, China allowed a visit to the port by another U.S. Navy vessel.

Washington has repeatedly expressed concern that China is pouring money into expanding its forces. Beijing increased its military budget by nearly 18 percent to about $45 billion last year, the largest annual hike in more than a decade, and U.S. officials believe actual spending is greater.

The Chinese, meanwhile, are closely watching to see how U.S. concern translates into changes in the U.S. Navy. When the *Ohio*, which is based in Bangor, Wash., docked at Guam last month, China's official Xinhua news agency called the submarine a "warehouse of explosives" and a "devil of deterrence."

"If the *Ohio* turns west from Guam, it would need only hours to travel to the coastal waters of many Asian nations," it said. "The U.S. Navy believes the power of the cruise missile-armed nuclear submarine will be tremendous in a future war."

That is exactly what the Navy wants China and others to think, and why the *Ohio* is in the Pacific.

"The advanced capabilities that we have brought to this ship make it a premier front-line submarine," said the *Ohio*'s executive officer, Lt. Commander Al Ventura. "This has taken the submarine force to a whole new level."

The *Ohio* has both vast firepower and the ability to deploy quickly to wherever it's needed.

It has 24 launch tubes, 15 of which have been fitted for multiple Tomahawks—more than 100 in total. That's more than were launched in the entire first Gulf War. From an offshore position in the Pacific, it could strike Pyongyang, North Korea. From the Indian Ocean, it could hit anywhere in Afghanistan.

The switch to conventional missiles is a concept borne of necessity.

Under a 1992 disarmament treaty, the U.S. Navy had to give up four of its 18 "boomers," huge submarines that have for decades served as mobile launch platforms for long-range nuclear missiles and were primary players in the Cold War game of cat-and-mouse between Washington and Moscow.

AP

Watching the monitors, crew members work in the navigation room aboard the USS Ohio, US Navy's newest billion-dollar submarine, during its maiden voyage off Guam, Sunday, Feb. 3, 2008.

Instead of scrapping the ships, however, the Navy converted them. The nuclear weapons were replaced with conventional Tomahawk guided missiles and several of the launch tubes refitted to deploy the Navy SEALs in submersible boats.

Because of the sheer size of the sub—it's 560 feet (170 meters) long—it has more room for its 160-member crew and dozens of commandos than an attack submarine. While still cramped and claustrophobic, sailors have bigger beds and several places for working out, which the SEALs do constantly.

Among the SEALs, stealth remains a way of life.

In a wardroom just yards from the Tomahawk missile tubes, the head of the SEAL contingent agreed to be interviewed, but only if he wasn't identified or photographed, lest he or his family be tracked down by terrorists, for whom killing a SEAL would be a major propaganda coup.

"We go places," he said. "Let's just leave it at that."

While near Guam, the SEALs conducted operations simulating an undersea launch in their submersible and a landing to assess a fictitious terrorist threat. Guam was dubbed "Backwateria" and the terrorists called the "Al-Shakur." The names of the terrorist leaders were taken from a popular TV cartoon.

The island could just as well have been Taiwan, or the shores of North Korea.

The SEAL commander said the simulations were not aimed at any particular country.

Still, he said, it's not just idle training.

"This capability has been used before, and it will probably be used again," he said.

Judge declines to rule on alleged misuse of estate

From Page 1

Creditors and heir Ann Margaret Aaron, however, doesn't believe this. They allege that Attao improperly used Margarita Duenas estate's finances for personal expenses.

In an order issued last week, Superior Court associate judge Juan T. Lizama declined to rule on that alleged misuse and stated he is leaving the issue of recovering or accounting for the money to the new administrator.

Lizama confirmed the change of administrator from Attao to George Duenas, spouse of the deceased Margarita Attao Duenas.

But Aaron also objected. She alleged dishonesty and fraud on the part of the new administrator George Duenas, estate attorney, and former administratrix Attao.

The estate of Margarita Attao Duenas has been in probate for over three years. Prior to the change in administrator, Attao had served as the administratrix for the estate.

Margarita Attao Duenas (decedent) died on Dec. 24, 2003. Letters of administration were filed by Attao in April 2004.

Attao continued in the role of administratrix until a hearing was held on Feb. 5, 2008 about the change of administrator.

During the hearing, Aaron claimed that the new administrator (George Duenas) and estate attorney colluded to deny her the position of administratrix of the estate. Aaron insisted that the form she and her siblings signed and agreed to listed her as the next administratrix.

For these reasons, Aaron and the other heirs opposed the appointment of George Duenas as new administrator.

But Lizama in his order ruled that while the court is cognizant of Aaron's objections to the appointment of George Duenas as the new administrator, it remains unconvinced that he should not be appointed.

Lizama cited that the Commonwealth Rules of Probate Procedure clearly state that anyone who "is a resident of the Commonwealth and over 18 years of age may petition for letters of administration."

"George Duenas, as proven by evidence submitted to the court, satisfies this preliminary requirement to become administrator, namely he is a resident of the CNMI and over 18," the judge said.

Of course, Lizama said Aaron could also satisfy these requirements.

Lizama said the Rules of Probate Procedure also state that the court "shall appoint an administrator for the estate who under the circumstances will best be able to administer the estate."

Under the circumstances presented in this probate case, Lizama said he has decided that George Duenas is the best person for the job.

Lizama said he finds no substantive reason to disqualify George Duenas as administrator, since even Aaron conceded that he is competent and of sound mind.

While the court understands her frustration, Lizama said, Aaron's unproven allegations of dishonesty do not qualify as a legal basis for disqualification of George Duenas as administrator.

If Aaron had wanted to be appointed as administratrix of the estate, she should not have waited for the case to mature for three years, Lizama noted.

"Any person who is a resident of the CNMI and over 18 may petition for letters of administration at any time," he said.

Aaron, the judge said, did not comply with these formalities of probate procedure nor did she rush to become administratrix.

Lizama also noted that Aaron would not be a likely alternative for the position of administrator.

"The obvious antagonism and disharmony between her and other heirs is not conducive to an efficient administration of an estate. This is a primary goal for a probate court to consider," he said.

George Duenas, being the spouse of the deceased, Lizama said, is an entirely appropriate choice for the position as much of the estate debt in question can also be attributed to him and his credit rating.

"Therefore it is in his, and the estate's best interest to see the estate finally distributed and settled in the most efficient manner possible," he added.

The other controversial probate proceedings are the Rita Kaipat and Angel Malite estates.

The administrator of Rita Kaipat estate was kicked out from the probate and subsequently arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for wire fraud and money laundering for allegedly stealing $625,575 from the estate's money. The administrator's attorney is also now being hunted by the FBI for the same charges.

In the Angel Malite probate, the administrator was also removed from the case for mismanagement of the estate. His two lawyers were suspended from practicing law. The high court, however, lifted the suspension while the lawyers' appeal is pending.

ESGR seeking support for Guard, Reserves

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Employer Support of Guard and Reserve Guam-CNMI Committee, which is based on Guam, flew in Monday to solicit endorsements of the Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve.

ESGR volunteer member Severian Atalig Ogo, who flew in with other ESGR administrators Capt. Josephine Blas and Norma Castillon, said that the trip to Saipan is for educational and awareness purposes.

"We're visiting because we want to educate employers of the USERRA [Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act] law and to ask them for their support for people in uniform," said Ogo.

The endorsement of the Statement of Support certifies that an employer has pledged to not deny employment to anyone serving in the Guard or Reserves, not limit or reduce employee job or career opportunities because of service in the Guard or Reserves, and grant leaves of absence for military services in the Guard and Reserve consistent with existing laws.

The ESGR, which is sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Defense, has garnered over 60 endorsements in the past three days.

"We went around the Legislature, different offices in the government, and private sector as well as the Saipan Chamber of Commerce. We're very pleased with the turnout as it has been overwhelming," Ogo said.

The ESGR will be back in either May or June where they will be meeting with all employees who are interested to learn more about the USSERA law.

"At that time, we will have our entire committee come out here to educate in different areas of the program," said Ogo.

Century Insurance president David Sablan endorsed the Statement of Support Thursday evening.

In addition to his support, he said that he is willing to assist in establishing an ESGR committee in the CNMI.

Sablan mentioned looking into communicating with Washington and hopes that the CNMI will have its own ESGR committee.

"We have a different setup of government and it's not appropriate for Guam to be running our state organization. We don't have the same governmental structure," said Sablan.

Sablan was the state chair for the organization in 1985 for a period of five years.

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Carmen Fernandez was among those who had inked her support for the guards and reserves.

"We have one NMC employee who was recently called to active duty," Fernandez said. "This resolution is one of the ways to show her that we stand behind her during her deployment."

Century Insurance president David Sablan, center, endorses the Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve.
JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Lunar New Year a boon for Tinian Dynasty

Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino reported that they enjoyed high hotel occupancy in the run up to and during the Lunar New Year celebrations in the CNMI's casino island.

Hotel manager Tom Liu said charter flight from Guangzhou and Shanghai contributed to the increase in hotel occupancy, as tourists from those locales flew to Tinian to celebrate the Year of the Rat.

"We were very busy this past week during Chinese New Year celebration. Average occupancy were in the mid-80 percent from Feb. 4 until Feb. 12 when the last Guangzhou extra charter flight passengers departed," he said in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune.*

While the start of the Year of the Rat resulted in an increase it its hotel occupancy, Liu said he doesn't expect the same result for this weekend's Tinian Hot Pepper Festival.

"We don't expect much during the Hot Pepper Festival as it's an local event that doesn't draw much overseas tourists since there are no promotions being done in the major markets in Japan, Korea, and China in advance. However, we will post notices in the lobby for in-house guests who are on Tinian this weekend," he said. ***(Mark Rabago)***

APPOINTMENT TO PANEL OF CHAPTER 7 TRUSTEES

The Office of the United States Trustee is seeking resumes from persons wishing to be considered for appointment to the panel of trustees who administer cases filed under chapter 7 of the bankruptcy code. The appointment is for cases filed in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Districts of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Chapter 7 trustees receive compensation and reimbursement for expenses in each case in which they serve, pursuant to court order under 11 U.S.C. Sec. 330 and Sec. 326. Please note this is not a salaried position.

The minimum qualifications for appointment are set forth in Title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations at Part 58. To be eligible for appointment, an applicant must possess strong administrative, financial and interpersonal skills. Fiduciary experience or familiarity with the bankruptcy area is desirable but not mandatory. A successful applicant will be required to undergo a background check, and must qualify to be bonded. Although chapter 7 trustees are not federal employees, appointments are made consistent with federal Equal Opportunity policies, which prohibit discrimination in employment.

Forward resumes to Carol K. Muranaka, Assistant United States Trustee , Office of the United States Trustee, Vacancy Code: ST, 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 602, Honolulu, HI, 96813. All resumes should be postmarked on or before March 14, 2008.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Nativism's electoral flop

In the aftermath of last summer's national debate over immigration reform, elected officials of all stripes were stunned by the popular passion and fury unleashed by the failed effort in Congress to provide an eventual path to citizenship for illegal immigrants. Many Republicans concluded hopefully—and many Democrats reckoned fretfully—that immigration would be the premier wedge issue of the 2008 campaign. But with the presidential primaries in their homestretch, it now appears that both the hopes and the fears were overstated.

On the Republican side, what's striking is that the talk-show tantrums of the anti-immigrant ranters, despite having riled up a vocal minority, have had little impact on the outcome of primaries. Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., who styled himself as the nativists' champion, dropped out of the presidential contest after never registering more than a blip in the polls. Former Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts took his turn at strident rhetoric against undocumented immigrants, to no discernible effect. Rudy Giuliani all but repudiated what had been his constructive, tolerant record on immigration as mayor of New York and then got shellacked in Hispanic-heavy Florida. Former Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas took the most rabid line of all, promising to drive all 12 million illegal immigrants from the country in four months; he seems destined to be an also-ran, barring unforeseen miracles.

Granted, hard-liners remain apoplectic about Arizona Sen. John McCain's erstwhile role as a champion of what they regard as amnesty for illegal immigrants; their ire may yet erode the Republican base in the general election. And many Republican congressional candidates will surely try to exploit the residual fervor on the issue in this fall's elections. But the fact remains that Mr. McCain is the presumptive GOP nominee, despite what amounts to only a mild shift in emphasis in his longstanding position. (He now talks about the primacy of border security but continues to express compassion for illegal immigrants, who, he notes, "are God's children.") Perhaps the more interesting fallout from the immigration debate has been in the Democratic primaries, which have been marked by a major surge of Hispanic voters in some states. In California, 29 percent of Democratic voters on Super Tuesday were Hispanic, almost twice the share they represented in 2004. In Connecticut, their share of the party's primary electorate leaped to 7 percent from just 2 percent four years ago. In Missouri, where the Latino vote was negligible in 2004, Hispanics accounted for 5 percent of Democratic primary voters this year.

Those jumps go well beyond Hispanics' increasing share of the overall population. And while Hispanics constitute a diverse electorate, concerned with jobs, education, health care, crime and other issues, it's a safe bet that the nativist rancor of last year's debate has motivated and mobilized many of them. This is bad news for a Republican Party that has aligned itself with the most noxious anti-immigrant voices.

No doubt, the unrealistic and irresponsible advocates of harassment, roundups and deportations will show up at the polls this November, if only to cast ballots against candidates who would embrace workable reforms. The hope here is that their electoral clout will be outweighed by a backlash among fired-up and fed-up Latino voters.

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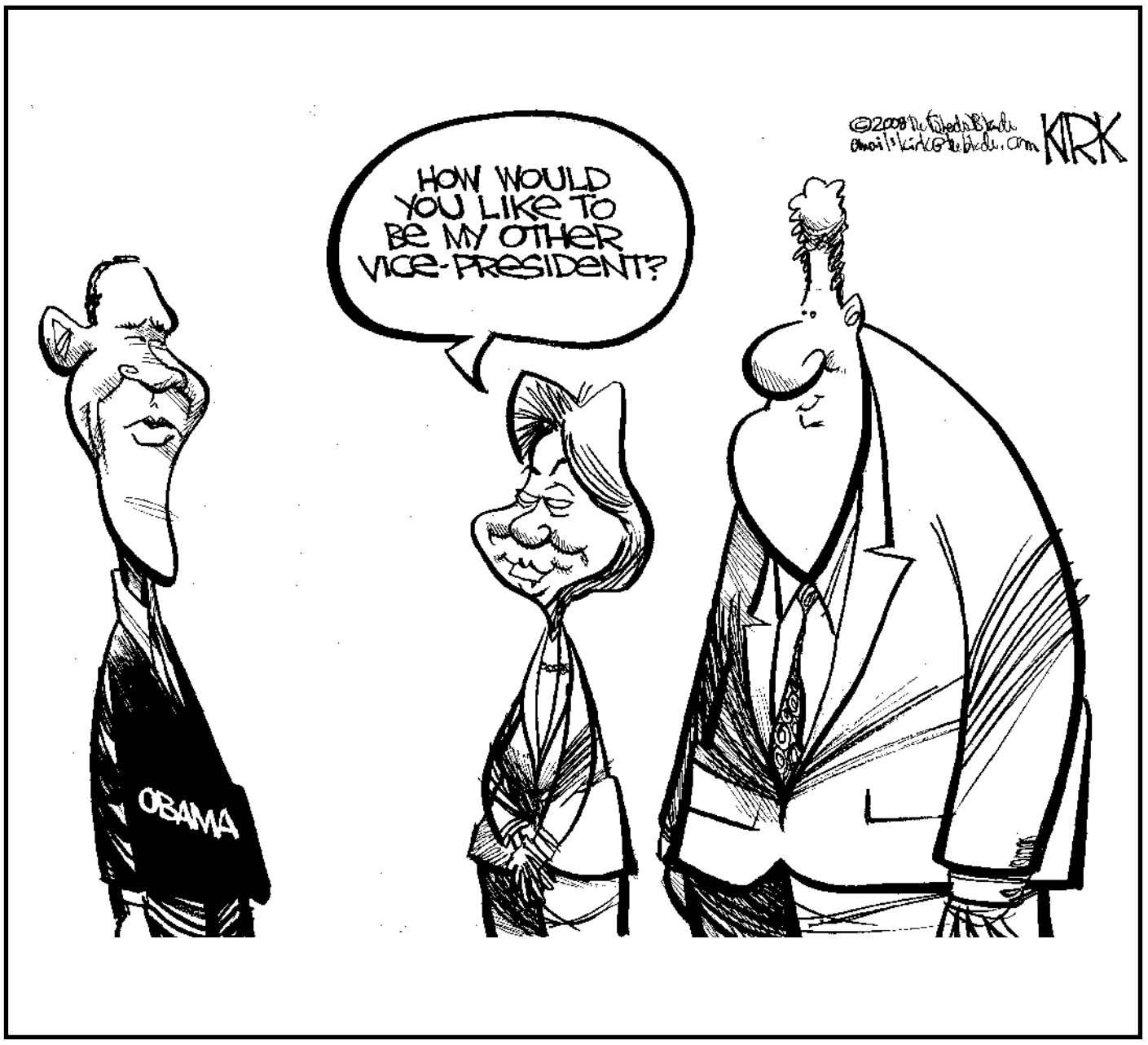

Sanctimony's turn at bat

By COLMAN MCCARTHY
Special to The Washington Post

Colman McCarthy, a former Washington Post columnist, directs the Center for Teaching Peace. He teaches at Georgetown University Law Center, American University and three public high schools.

What's been heralded as a "showdown"—the appearance of baseball pitcher Roger Clemens before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on Wednesday—is more likely to be a show. The purpose is to scour for more information regarding the "Report to the Commissioner of Baseball of an Independent Investigation into the Illegal Use of Steroids and Other Performance Enhancing Substances by Players in Major League Baseball." In the lingo of dugouts and bullpens, they want to get the dope on doping.

This is the congressional committee, chaired by Rep. Henry Waxman, that in recent months has held hearings on the status of corruption in the Iraqi government and the threat of global warming. From matters of statecraft, now it's Roger Clemens's tush. Was he injected with steroids? In a Jan. 7 press conference in Houston, Roger the Rocket asserted that he had used only vitamin B-12 and lidocaine.

Clemens has asked the public to give him "the benefit of the doubt" as he tries to clear his name. I'll benefit. I was delighted when he refused to be bullied by reporters that day. He was angry and defiant, unwilling to hunker down and allow scribes to preen in their favorite role as truth-detectors. The New York Times, out to mow down Clemens with a bean ball, located three "body language analysts" to judge the pitcher's behavior during an interview with "60 Minutes": "The analysts noticed that Clemens swallowed hard, looked down and licked and pursed his lips when answering questions—all signs, they said, that he might not have been telling the truth."

Hard swallowing, looking down and the rest: That's the gritty Clemens on the mound, a perfectionist throwing baseballs as few ever have. Why be different because it is reporters, not batters, you are up against?

This is the second time members of Congress have posed as drug-busters cleaning up the great American pastime. Except that drug use—whether involving legal or illegal drugs—already is the American pastime, and it is far bigger than baseball.

I'm hoping that Roger Clemens polls the members of Waxman's committee on their use of performance-enhancing drugs. Start with Viagra. Or Cialis, ready for action "when the moment is right"—say, a congressman stumbling home after a late-night floor vote on an earmark bill. Clemens might ask the members how many need shots of caffeine drugs to get themselves up and out every morning. He might ask the members how often they reach for another shot of Jack Daniels to enhance their performance while grubbing for bucks from lobbyists at fund-raisers. And before leaving Capitol Hill, he should grill the allegedly clean-living baseball reporters on how many of them sit in the press box enhancing their bodies with alcohol, nicotine and caffeine drugs. And a blunt or two when night games go extra innings and deadline nerves need steadying.

I see steroids, and all drugs, as an issue of personal freedom. Is there a difference between fans at big-league baseball games stoned on alcohol while cheering athletes on the base paths juiced with steroids? What's the difference between scoring with Viagra and scoring with steroids? What's the difference between people freely abusing their bodies with one drug but not another, as long as no one else is harmed and the consequences are self-sustained?

No difference but one. Some protectors of the public good—reluctantly, the 30 big-league team owners and now the Waxman committee and the sanctimonious sports media posing as guardians of baseball's purity—have decreed a crackdown. Go get 'em, Congress. Pass a law.

First, though, let's check in with calmer legal minds. In the 5 to 4 decision last summer that upheld the suspension of an Alaskan high school student for holding a sign—"Bong Hits 4 Jesus"—during a parade, a dissenting Justice John Paul Stevens wrote: "The current dominant opinion supporting the war on drugs in general, and our anti-marijuana laws in particular, is reminiscent of the opinion that supported the nationwide ban on alcohol consumption when I was a student. While alcoholic beverages are now regarded as ordinary articles of commerce, their use was then condemned with the same moral fervor that now supports the war on drugs."

Any chance of this wisdom seeping in? Don't hold your breathalyzer.

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Every contestant had a prayer

By JOEL STEIN
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Stein is a columnist for the Times*. E-mail Stein at jstein@latimescolumnists.com.*

Christians never do pop culture right. Their rock songs are clogged with nature metaphors, their video games are too soft, their Orlando amusement park houses an attraction called "The Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities." So when I found out about the Christian Oscars—the nickname for the Movieguide Faith and Values Awards—I had to see how they'd ruin an awards show. Could their movie stars master self-congratulations? Act happy for people they don't really like? Could this be the pop culture arena Christians do better than heathens?

Though I expected a small, pious event, I learned there are no small awards shows anymore. Not even on a Tuesday. The red carpet at the Beverly Hilton was so clogged—"Extra," "Entertainment Tonight," the Christian version of "Extra," the Christian version of "Entertainment Tonight"—that the fire marshal turned reporters away. There were also plenty of celebrities: Macy Gray, Louis Gossett Jr., Stephen Baldwin, Buzz Aldrin, Lee Meriwether, Jane Russell. This was such a big deal that even dead people came.

Inside the same ballroom where the Golden Globes are held, I was seated at a table full of Dutch and German Christians. To my right was Jutta Renz, who told me she introduced muffins to Germany and is known there as "Miss Muffin." She has written 12 muffin cookbooks, created muffin cartoon characters and, divinely inspired, dashed off an entire muffin-based musical in one night. She's in L.A. for a few weeks looking for an agent to handle her hyphenate talents (her card says "music-media-muffins"). But she doesn't like what she's learning: "An agent gets 10 percent? I'd rather give it to a good person."

Though the Christian Oscars looked just like any other awards show, there were some differences. The Oscars don't start with a prayer. And they don't have a letter in their program from President Bush wishing them a successful event. I stared at it for a long time, wondering if all his correspondence begins, "I send greetings." I got the feeling that Bush expected that, during his presidency, he'd get to meet aliens.

Also, there's no PowerPoint at the Oscars. Ted Baehr, who runs Movieguide, gives a great slide show, only one frame of which mentioned "cussing." One slide explained that, back in 1985, when he first started his organization, only one movie—"Trip to Bountiful"—had faith and values. Now 51.7 percent of movies do, including "Live Free or Die Hard." The definition might have expanded a little.

Typical award winners simply thank God for deciding that the People's Choice Award should go to them. But at the Christian Oscars, a simple thanks won't do. Bailey Madison, just 8 years old yet accepting one of several awards given to "Saving Sarah Cain," said, "Every morning I wake up and say a prayer to let God shine his light through me." When I was 8, I just wanted God to keep making more "Garfield" cartoons.

Not everyone at the Movieguide awards was part of the Christian right. Some were just looking for attention, even if that meant Christian attention. Asked about her Christian-ness, presenter Adrienne Janic, host of TLC's car show "Overhaulin'," would only say she was "a good person." When I pressed her on her favorite value, she chose "fun." Also, she might not have dressed appropriately. "Did you notice I've got two napkins on my lap? That's because the slit goes all the way up my dress," she said. When she was warned of the long-term implications of wearing that dress to this event, she said, "Oh, I've got a mansion in hell."

But most of the people there really did want to make films and shows with faith and values. Actress Ali Landry, who won an award for the film "Bella," may have once been the hot Doritos girl, but she has become an observant Catholic. "I had a big event in my personal life. Then I re-evaluated and started going to theology class, and then I found my husband," she said. That big event was Mario Lopez cheating on her.

God really does work in mysterious ways.

As the show went on, I got a little overwhelmed by the Jesus stuff. And all the well-intentioned attempts to squeak clean the culture didn't convince me that sex and violence in art isn't truthful and cathartic. Shakespeare, after all, would never win a Faith and Values award. But "Alvin and the Chipmunks" did.

Everyone went home with a gift bag that consisted of a Bible. I don't think that book is an answer to the world's problems, but maybe it's better than praying at the altar of celebrity. Though they could have thrown in some face cream, sunglasses and a gym membership. Christians still have a lot to learn.

Where there's no shame in pro-Americanism

By GREGORY RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

When the Kentucky-based Yum Corp. was looking for a city in Mexico in which to open a Taco Bell, it must have figured it couldn't go wrong with Monterrey, an ultramodern, hyper-Americanized metropolis 125 miles from the Texas border in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. Regiomontanos, as Monterrey residents are called, wear their pro-Americanism on their sleeves and see little shame in their streets being as overrun by corporate American retailers as any suburban town north of the border.

Norteno Mexican culture has long been known for its openness to American ways, but Monterrey's love affair with American consumerism has reached a level that has to be seen to be believed. Bennigan's, Applebee's, Dairy Queen, Starbucks, Carl's Jr., McDonald's, Pizza Hut, IHOP -- they're all here. So are Wal-Mart, Hampton Inn, Home Depot, OfficeMax and Bally Total Fitness.

I spent part of Fat Tuesday strolling the aisles of a local H-E-B, a Texas-based supermarket chain that has brought the Mexican-owned Gigante chain to its knees locally. Three years ago, H-E-B opened a $30 million retail support center here, and the secret of its success, I'm told, is, well, that it's unabashedly American.

When it first came to Mexico, H-E-B launched a Mexico-specific house brand called Economax, but the company's market researchers quickly found that Mexican consumers preferred the long-standing American versions. Sure, H-E-B sells tortillas, bolillos and traditional Mexican pan dulce, but the brightly lighted, well-stocked aisles generally boasted such items as H-E-B brand chocolate chip waffles, Oscar Meyer bologna, Del Monte tomato paste, Jell-O pudding, Fruit Loops, Gatorade and, much to my surprise, cans of "ranch-style" beans made in the U.S. whose label boasted that they offered "the true taste of the West."

All these imports do come at a cost. In part because Regios consume so many foreign products, the cost of living here is higher than it is in most other parts of Mexico. But the city's large middle class doesn't seem to mind paying the extra price.

In fact, the university students I spoke to here not only bought American products in Monterrey but crossed the border to outlets in such places as McAllen, Texas. When I asked why, they said goods were cheaper there.

But it doesn't add up. The cost of gas, the 2 1/2-hour drive on a toll road that costs $60 round trip and the increasingly inhospitable post-Sept. 11 waits—sometimes three hours—to cross the international border all suggest that the real reason they love to shop in Texas is status and the idea of the U.S. as the source of the good life.

Just outside the San Pedro district here, which has the highest per-capita income of any community in Latin America, you'll find some billboards entirely in English. Particularly when discussing entertainment, middle-class Regios like to pepper their Spanish with English. They'll talk about going to a "lugar muy nice," they'll say they're going to "tomar un break" or "echar unos drinks."

I met a few transplants from Mexico City who found the Regios' love affair with the U.S. more than a little offensive. But locals, particularly the young ones, don't see any problem with living bicultural lives.

"We feel like Mexicans, but we live as Americans," said Sarahi Garcia, a 22-year-old international relations student at the elite Tecnologico de Monterrey university. The state politicians I met here seemed aggrieved by all the talk in the U.S. of hardening the border. But still, few people I spoke to thought it would ultimately damage the Regios' strong sense of connectedness with their northern neighbor. The ties are just too deep.

In September, the governor of Nuevo Leon inaugurated a beautiful Museum of the Northeast, and by the "northeast" they mean the Mexican states of Nuevo Leon, Coahuila and Tamaulipas as well as the U.S. state of Texas. Unlike many U.S. historians and institutions that treat Mexican history as separate from our own, the curators at this museum see the histories of northern Mexico and Texas as being connected not only by war but by shared heritage and intertwined economies. They don't ignore the reality of the border, but they also don't pretend that cultural and economic forces don't flow in both directions.

So does this powerful and historical sense of biculturalism mean that Taco Bell—with its faux Mexican food—is destined to thrive in Monterrey? I don't think so. I went by on Wednesday at lunchtime and ate my Fiestaco—yes, that's what it was called—all by myself.

University student Sofia Ugarte, 18, explained why. "There's nothing more typically Mexican than tacos," she said. "That's one thing that we don't need to import from the United States. Not even here in Monterrey."

Rodriguez, a columnist for the Times' opinion pages, is director of the California Fellows Program at the New America Foundation and author of Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America. E-mail him at grodriguez@latimescolumnists.com.

Who will the haters love?

By JIM SHEA
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Shea is a columnist for The Courant.

I'm worried about hate radio.

It could be losing its influence.

If hate radio loses its influence, it will lose its audience.

If it loses its audience, it will lose its sponsors.

If it loses its sponsors, well, I'm not sure I want to live in a country where people can disagree without hating. I mean, debate without hate is so, I don't know, so lily-livered, so PBS.

Of course, the maestros of hate radio -- the Michael Savages, the Glenn Becks, the Big Kahuna of Hate his own self, Rush Limbaugh -- have only themselves to blame for their predicament.

In the race for the Republican presidential nomination, they put all their hate in one basket and lost big time. You would think they would have been savvy enough to hedge their hate, just in case it became necessary to switch hatreds in midstream. But they weren't.

No, the boys gave all their man love to Mitt Romney, and when he dropped out of the race -- after concluding that discretion was the better part of remaining wealthy -- they were left at the altar.

The obvious thing for Rush and his supporting cast to do would be to back the presumptive GOP nominee, John McCain. That, however, is not as easy as it sounds.

What got McCain condemned to hate radio hell is his position on illegal immigration. In hate radio's view, McCain doesn't hate the 12 million or so illegals in this country enough to be a real conservative, not to mention American.

So, for the mullahs of the microphones to start supporting McCain, they would have to ease up on their hatred of illegal immigrants, and that's just not going to happen. Life's too short.

Hate radio must not be allowed to fall silent.

If hate radio loses its voice, where will listeners go for their daily infusion of vitriol, "Prairie Home Companion?"

If hate radio fades to static, where will we turn for the half truth? Distortion? Mean-spirited humor?

And what would become of fear-mongering? Tell me life without fear-mongering isn't a frightening thought.

What to do?

Here is my suggestion:

I think all the hate-radio jocks, along with all the TV talking-head haters, should turn on each other.

Seriously, these people are not only accomplished haters but are themselves easy to hate.

We're not just talking Limbaugh and Savage here, we're also looking at the likes of Bill O'Reilly, Laura Ingraham, Sean Hannity and the undisputed Queen of All Hate, Ann Coulter.

This group would push each other to new levels of viciousness, which would be very entertaining, which is the point of hate media, right?

The hatefest would attract not only the regular hate-radio audience but people from the other end of the political spectrum, who would tune in to see people they hate hate each other.

Like I said, I'm concerned about hate radio. I hope this helps.

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲85° ▼74°	▲83° ▼75°	▲83° ▼75°	▲82° ▼74°	▲83° ▼74°

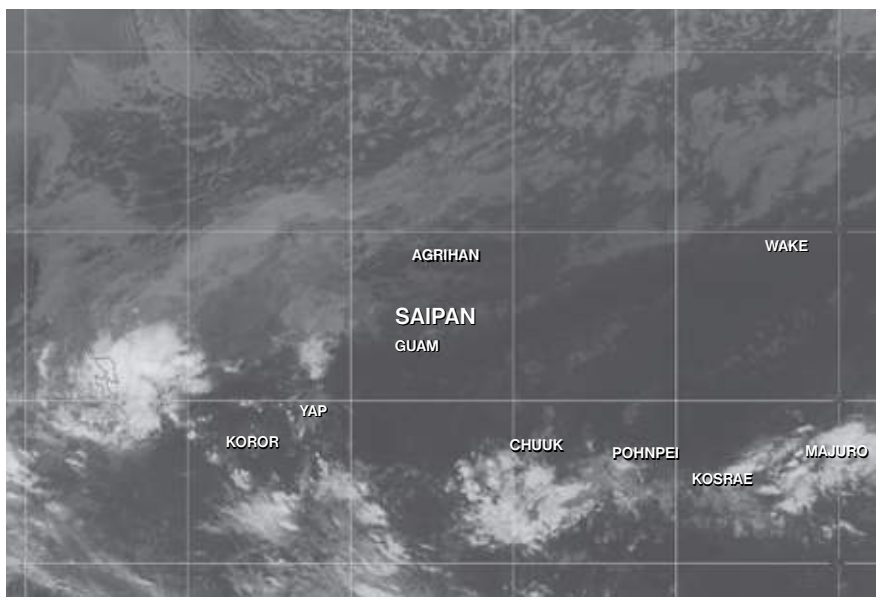
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	▲88	▼78
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼76
Yap	Mostly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Chuuk	Cloudy	▲87	▼77
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲83	▼75
Kosrae	Sunny	▲89	▼76
Majuro	Cloudy	▲83	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Showers	▲70	▼63
Beijing	Sunny	▲43	▼24
Hong Kong	Partly Sunny	▲62	▼56
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲80	▼66
London	Mostly Sunny	▲48	▼28
Los Angeles	Partly Sunny	▲73	▼52
Manila	Showers	▲81	▼73
Melbourne	Sunny	▲87	▼70
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲83	▼71
New York	Mostly Cloudy	▲38	▼37
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	▲42	▼30
Paris	Sunny	▲48	▼32
Pusan	Sunny	▲45	▼23
Rome	Sunny	▲47	▼28
Salem	Mostly Sunny	▲54	▼33
San Francisco	Partly Sunny	▲63	▼46
Seoul	Sunny	▲36	▼16
Tokyo	Partly Sunny	▲45	▼34
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲47	▼39

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, SATURDAY, FEB. 16, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

An old cold front extends southwestward from 23N180 to just north of Wake Island at 21N166E to 18N154E, then continues as a shear line to Rota in the CNMI to beyond 130E at 11N. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are found along this boundary and northward to beyond 25N. A near-equatorial trough runs southeastward from 4N130E to end at EQ144E. Convergent winds near the eastern end of the trough are producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms south of Koror and Yap, or south of a line from 4N135E to 5N141E to EQ144E. Trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers and a few thunderstorms across a broad area of Micronesia within 150 miles of a line from 3N147E to 5N155E to 4N165E to 7N171E to 6N180. This area includes Majuro, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae and Kwajalein lie on the northern edge of this area.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
6:17AM Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet
10:43AM Today	Low Tide:	1.4 Feet
3:22PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
11:25PM Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:41AM	6:21PM
Monday	6:41AM	6:21PM
Tuesday	6:40AM	6:22PM
Wednesday	6:40AM	6:22PM
Thursday	6:39AM	6:22PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	2:34PM	4:09AM*
Monday	3:38PM	5:01AM*
Tuesday	4:38PM	5:48AM*
Wednesday	5:36PM	6:30AM*
Thursday	6:30PM	7:08AM*

*Following Day

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  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
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- CAMPUS BULLETIN
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- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

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- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 15, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 078	8:25am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
NW 083	4:30pm	7:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:25am	11:05am	Daily
Saipan-Manila			
CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3
Saipan-Seoul			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Guanzhou			
CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6
Saipan-Shanghai			
MU 590	4:20am	7:00am	2,6
Guam-Manila			
CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2,7
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7
Guam-Hongkong			
CO 909	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	Daily
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya
Osaka-Saipan			
NW 084	10:40am	3:10pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Manila-Saipan			
CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3
Seoul-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7
Guanzhou-Saipan			
CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5
Shanghai-Saipan			
MU 589	8:05pm	3:00am+1	1,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2,7
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Hongkong-Guam			
CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5
Rota-Guam			
CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Schedule of Religious Services

CATHOLIC

Mt. Carmel Cathedral
Sunday Mass: 6am, 9am, 11am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm

Korean Center
Sunday: 10:30am
Wednesday: 10am
Thursday-Friday: 8pm
Saturday: 3pm and 7:30pm

Kristo Rai Parish
Sunday Mass: 6am, 8am and 9:30am
Monday- Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm
Saturday: 6am and 6pm

Nuestra Senora De Soledad Parish
Wednesday Mass: 6pm
First Friday Healing Mass: 6pm
Saturday Mass: 6pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30am & 9am

Saint Jude Parish
Sunday: 6am, 8am, 10am
Wednesday and Thursday: 6pm

San Antonio Parish
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Tuesday and Friday: 6pm

San Francisco de Borja-Rota
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6pm

San Isidro-Rota
Sunday: 5am and 10am
Monday-Wednesday: 7pm
Thursday-Saturday: 5am and 7pm

San Jose (Oleai) Parish
Sunday: 6am and 7:30am
Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday: 6pm

San Roque Parish
Sunday: 9am
Wednesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10:30am

San Vicente Parish
Sunday: 6am, 9am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6pm

Santa Remedios
Sunday: 7:30am
Tuesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10am-Baptism

Santa Soledad
Sunday: 7:30am

PROTESTANT

Born Again Christian (Upper Room Int'l Ministries), Saipan
Wednesday Prayer and Healing Night: 8-10:30pm
Saturday Tagalog Service: 8-10:30pm
Sunday English Service: 9:30-11am
Sunday School for Children: 10-11am
Sunday Filipino Service: 7-9pm

Calvary Baptist Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 9am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10am
Sunday Evening Worship: 6pm
Wednesday Prayer Service: 7pm

Chinese Christian Church of Saipan
Worship Services: Sunday, 10am and 7:30pm
Bible Study: Tuesday-Friday, 9:25pm

Cornerstone Christian Church, Saipan
Worship/Study Opportunities
Adult Sunday School: 9am
Youth Sunday School: 9am
English Worship Service Sunday: 10am
Sunday Service: 5:30pm
Worship/Fellowship Sunday: 9:30pm
Evangelism/Follow-up: Sunday/Monday: 1:30/7:30pm
Worship Team: Monday/Saturday-9pm;
Cell Groups Tuesday: 7:30pm
Mid-week Service: 7:30pm
Prayer Meeting Wednesday: 7:30pm
Leader's Bible Study Friday: 7:30 pm
Cornerstone School of Ministry Saturday: 7:30pm

Episcopal/Anglican Church on Saipan
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Worship Service Sunday: Holy Communion 9:00am
Place: Vicarage, Chalan Laulau,
Call 235-0545 for directions

Grace Christian Assembly, Saipan
Worship Service: 9am
GBI Classes: 4-6pm
Prayer Meeting: Monday-Saturday: 6am
Sunday: 7am
Home Cell Bible Study: Wednesday-Friday: 7pm
Youth Service: Friday: 5:30pm

Iglesia Ni Cristo, Saipan
Wednesday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Thursday: 5:30am (English); 7:45 pm (English)
Saturday: 5:30am (Tagalog); 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Sunday: 6:45am (English)
Children Worship Service: Sunday, 9am (English)

Immanuel United Methodist Church Koblerville
Sunday Services
8:00 AM Choir Rehearsal
9:00 AM Family Worship
3:00 PM Choir Rehearsal
Wednesdays at Parsonage
7:00 PM Prayer, Share and Care

Immanuel Methodist Church (Filipino Congregation)
Sunday: 7:00am-Choir Rehearsal
8:00am-Church Service
(Tagalog)
9:15am-Sunday School
Wednesday: 8:00pm-Prayer Meeting
Thursday: 7:30pm-Choir Practice
(Church)
Saturday: 8:00pm-Choir Practice
(Parsonage)

Jesus is Lord Church, Saipan
English Service: 9-11am, Sunday
Tagalog Service: 6-8pm, Sunday

Korean Presbyterian Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 8:20am
Sunday Adult: 10am
Sunday Adult: 11:30am
Sunday Evening: 7:30pm
Wednesday: 8pm

Life in the Son Christian Fellowship, Saipan
Sunday Worship Service: 10am– 12noon
Tuesday: Leadership Institute 7pm-10pm
Wednesday: Corporate prayer 7pm-8pm
Last Friday of the month-prayer: 7pm-11pm
Friday: Youth on Fire: 7pm-9pm
Tel. No. 235-LIFE (5433)

Marianas Baptist Church, Saipan
English Worship Service: 9-10:30am
Evening Worship Service: 6-7pm
Children Sunday School: 9-10:30am
Tagalog Sunday School: 11am-12pm
English Sunday School: 11am-12pm
Korean Worship Service: 11am-12pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting:
English, 7pm-8pm
Korean: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Missions Connection Ministry
Every Sunday Celebrations:
10am (English), 6pm (Tagalog)
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
Youth Impact Friday: 7pm
Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Northern Marianas Christian Church
Sunday Worship Service 10am Fina Sisu Housing FS#1 (Child care will be provided)
Friday Services @ 7pm Fina Sisu FS#1 for more info pls. contact Ryan 484-2620

Saipan Bible Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30-10am
Divine Worship: 10am-11:30am
Evening Service: 7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8pm-9pm

Saipan Christian Church
Sunday: 7:30am-10am
Sunday: 6:30 pm -9pm
Monday: 8 pm -10pm (Prayer Meeting)
Thursday: 8pm-10pm (Cell Groups)

Saipan Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Class: 9am
Sunday Worship: 10am
Sunday Worship English: 6pm
Sunday Worship Tagalog: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30pm

Saipan Community Church
(Sunday Services)
Palau Service: 7:30am-9am
English Service: 10am-11:30am
Chuukese Service: 1pm-2:30pm
Filipino Service: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Saipan
(Saturday Church Services)
Sabbath School Program: 9-10am
Lesson Study: 10-10:40am
Divine Service: 11-12pm
Visitation: 3-4pm
Adventist Youth Program: 4:30-5:30pm
Sundown Worship: 6-7pm

First Baptist Church
(Formerly Saipan Baptist Church)
Afetna St., San Antonio

Sunday		
	9am	Sunday school
	10am	Regular worship
	6pm	worship
Wednesday		
	7pm	worship

Everyone is warmly welcome to attend our worship services. Transportation is readily available to anyone who needs a ride to our church. For further information, please call Pastor David M. Mclure at 234-1939/235-7779.

Thy Word Ministries Saipan Faith Center
Phone 234-0209
New Christian Charismatic Church Service located in Chalan Paio, Beach Road in the Sablan building on the 2nd floor above Subway Sandwiches.
Senior Pastors: George & Gail Kamakahi
Asst. Pastors: Eric & Penny Sakaguchi
Service Times
Sunday 10:00am Worship Service
Sunday 7pm Discipleship Classes
Tuesday 10:00am Bible Studies
Tuesday 6:00pm Intercessory Prayer
Tuesday 7:00pm Music Practice
Wednesday 7:00pm Mid-Week Service
Saturday 10:00am Evangelism

Upper Room International Ministries

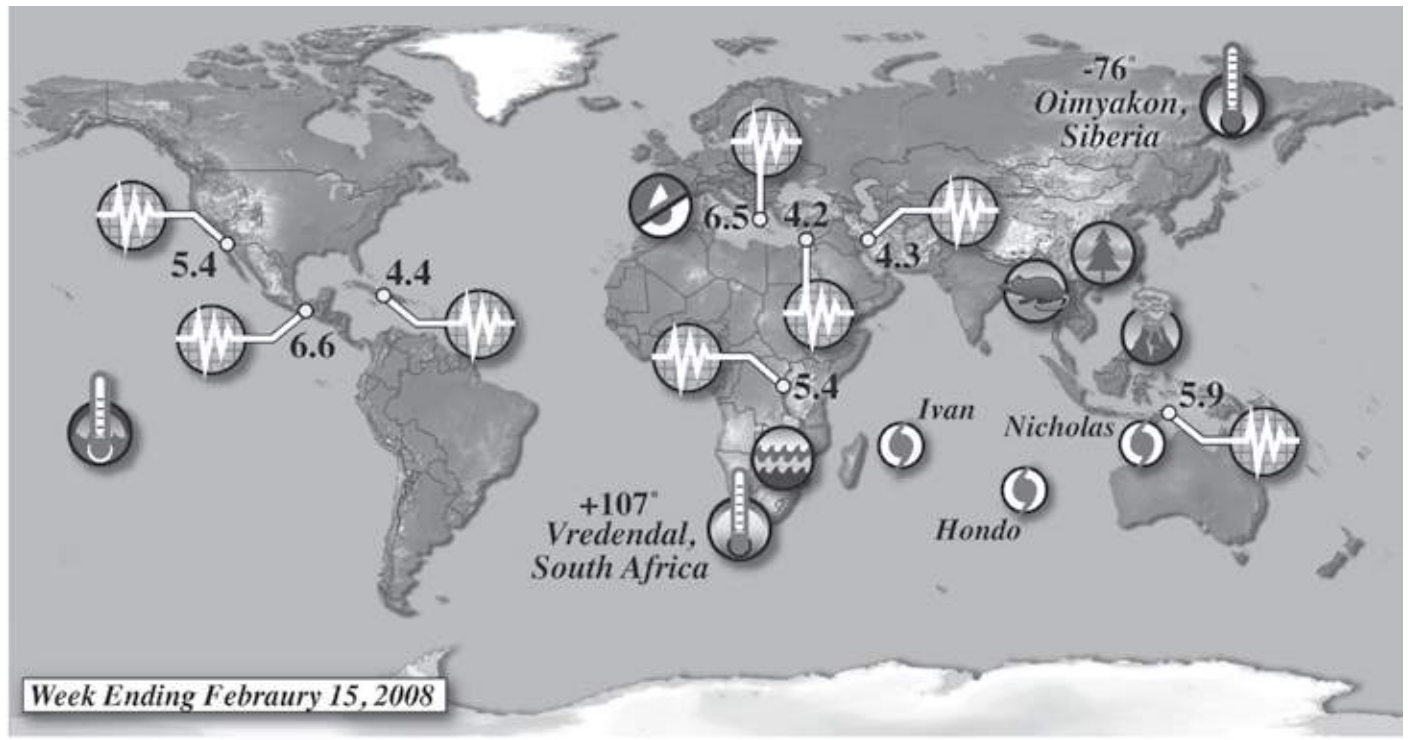
Sunday	5:30am-6:30am	
Morning prayer		
	7am-9am	English service
	7am-9am	Sunday school
	10am-12noon	English service,
Koblerville		
Wednesday	7pm-9pm	Prayer meeting
Saturday	7pm-9pm	Tagalog service

Venue: Jason Presbyterian Church
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30am
Sunday AM Worship:10:30am
Sunday PM Worship:7:00am
Wed Worship: 7:30pm
Prayer 45 min. Prior to Service Times
Morning Prayer: 6-8am M-S

Earthweek: A Diary of the Planet

By STEVE NEWMAN



La Niña Persists

The La Niña ocean-cooling in the tropical Pacific is likely to linger for a few more months, bringing further global weather disruptions, according to the World Meteorological Organization. The cool phase of the La Niña/ El Niño cycle began early last year, and has since been responsible for devastating floods across Africa, drought in parts of the southern United States and, to some degree, even the recent Chinese deep freeze, the U.N. agency reports. Climate expert Rupa Kumar Kolli said that computer models point to La Niña lasting through June, then slowly weakening to allow near-normal Pacific Ocean temperatures to return later this year.

Chinese Forest Disaster

Freak January snow and freezing temperatures that paralyzed many parts of China in January also damaged or destroyed one-tenth of the country's forests, according to state media. The China Daily, citing the State Forestry Administration, said a total of 43 million acres of forest in half of the country's provinces were affected by three weeks of savage wintry weather. The administration warned that further damage could occur as dead trees and downed branches dry up, posing an increased risk of forest fires this summer. The government says it plans to launch a massive planting effort in the spring to reforest affected areas.

Indian Ocean Cyclones

Tropical Cyclones Ivan and Hondo churned the open waters of the Indian Ocean without threatening any land areas.

■ Cyclone Nicholas formed just off Australia's northwestern coast.

African Inundations

Torrential rainfall across southern Africa from Mozambique to Angola has forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people and prompted the U.N. to seek international funding for emergency relief efforts. "We are only halfway through the rainy season and with more heavy ran expected, we must be able to assist potentially hundreds of thousands more people," John Holmes, U.N. under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said. Most recently, more than 10,000 people in southern Angola were forced from their homes by flash flooding.

Iberian Drought

The driest winter across parts of the Iberian Peninsula since 1917 has created such acute water shortages that cities such as Barcelona are drawing up a drastic plan to import drinking water by ship from Marseilles, in southern France, if spring rains fail to arrive. The long-range weather outlook for the next few months points to some showers, but not enough rainfall to help with the ongoing drought.

Earthquakes

The second strong earthquake to strike East Africa within two weeks killed one person and injured 60 others along the Democratic Republic of Congo-Rwanda border.

■ A moderate tremor in western Iran damaged dozens of buildings and injured 10 people.

■ A wide area of southern Greece was shaken by two strong quakes.

■ Earth movements were also felt in northern and southern Mexico, southeastern Cuba and Lebanon.

Philippine Rumblings

Increased activity within the central Philippines' Kanlaon volcano prompted officials to put nearby areas under alert, meaning that the mountain could expel blasts of steam and ash at any time. Located on Negros Island, Kanlaon produced a series of minor ash explosions during June and July of 2006, but activity dwindled by late in the year. On Aug. 10, 1996, Kanlaon erupted without warning, killing two students who were among 24 mountain climbers that became trapped near the summit.

A Blossoming of Rats

The first flowering of southeast Bangladesh's bamboo forests in 50 years has led to a plague of rats that has destroyed crops and brought the region to the brink of famine. The number of rats exploded late last year as the flowers provided a huge food source for the pests, prompting accelerated breeding. The bamboo flowering occurs about once every 50 years, with the last occurrence in 1958 causing a similar rodent plague. That infestation brought about a crippling famine for three consecutive years. The U.N. Development Program (UNDP) says that nearly all of the crops in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been devoured by the burgeoning rat population. UNDP spokesman Prasenjit Chakma told the BBC that people there are eating roots to survive, and that the denuded fields are now dotted with large rat holes. Scientists have been unable to determine why this one species of bamboo flowers in synchrony, over hundreds of square miles, once every five decades.

Distributed by: Universal Press Syndicate
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OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Vandalism claim nets arrest in burglary

SUTHERLIN, Ore. (AP)—They say problem gamblers never quit while they're ahead, and one properly insured Oregon man apparently didn't, either. Authorities recovered a stolen antique slot machine worth $4,000 and arrested the 30-year-old, who they said asked his wife to help file an insurance claim to cover damage done to his van during the heist. The slot machine was reported stolen in a burglary Monday night at a home in Sutherlin, 47 miles south of Portland, Douglas County sheriff's deputies said. Investigators learned that the victim's housekeeper filed a police report a day earlier claiming someone had thrown a piece of sheet metal through the window of her parked van. The sheet metal turned out to be from the back of the stolen slot machine, with the serial number attached. Deputies said the housekeeper's husband stole the machine, which tipped over as he drove away, breaking the van window. He told his wife the van had been vandalized and asked her to report the damage so insurance would cover it, deputies said.

Wis. ends sturgeon-spearing season

FOND DU LAC, Wis. (AP)—The sturgeon-spearing season on Lake Winnebago ended after just four days with a mammoth catch. Ed Blatz bagged a 172-pounder that measured 78 inches in length, the third-largest sturgeon taken from the lake since record keeping began in the 1950s. The only larger ones were a 180-pounder caught in 1953 and a 188-pounder caught in 2004. Spearers place shanties on the lake, cut holes through the ice and wait until a sturgeon swims beneath them, within range of the spear. Wisconsin shuts down the season after a certain number of fish are taken. This year, spearers had bagged 528 adult female sturgeon through Monday, or about 90 percent of the harvest cap of 556, so the season closed at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday. Blatz, of Fond du Lac, caught his fish Tuesday, one of 43 sturgeon speared this year that weighed 100 pounds or more. The lake sturgeon is a throwback to the age of dinosaurs 100 million years ago. The fish can live to be 100 years old. They have bony plates instead of scales, among other unique characteristics.

Good Housekeeping

Sugar shaker art: A sweet pour of success

By BETTIJANE LEVINE
(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Consider the humble sugar shaker, a staple of kitchens and coffee shops across the land. About 35 million have been sold—maybe double that if you include all the knock-offs—and not one of them labeled a work of art.

Yet that's exactly what they are, says design historian Bill Stern, a connoisseur of ubiquitous and unsung objects. "This decanter is iconic," he says, "the very essence of modernism, a perfect meld of function and form."

Stern, the guiding force behind the development of the Museum of California Design, extols the comfortable swell of the shaker's glass belly, which is shaped to be cradled in the palm. And the clean gleam of its smooth, slightly canted metal top, which cues a user's eye to tilt in the right direction. And the placement of the pouring flap, ingeniously engineered "so that when you tip the shaker," Stern says, "the whole weight of the contents is concentrated at the precise point where it has to come out."

Previous models were inferior, he says. They didn`t pour easily, and they collected dirt. But this design?

"There's not a whit of unnecessary decoration," he says. "It's made inexpensively but responsibly, so it won't prematurely break or wear out. Viewed at a distance, it is an extremely elegant object." And those are just some of the reasons it's still around.

The man who created it, Henry Keck, is still around too. An alumnus of Dartmouth and California Institute of Technology, Keck opened his Pasadena, Calif., industrial design firm in 1951 with partner Bernie Craig, a mechanical engineer. From their office came a few thousand innovations that have benefited millions: one of the designs for the black box flight recorder in airplanes; a golf cart for paraplegic players; a portable aspirator to revive the unconscious; an automatic tennis ball machine that Keck says is still the biggest seller in the world. The firm developed the first translucent plastic road barricade light, that life-saving flashing orange reflector that aids drivers: "It goes on automatically at sunset and blinks for one-tenth of a second, every second, so the batteries don't get used up," Keck says.

Then there's that unassuming little sugar shaker. Keck remembers the assignment well. It was 1955. The client, Dripcut-Starline Corp. in Santa Barbara, Calif., supplied restaurants nationwide.

"They asked us for a sugar dispenser that would be easier for restaurant workers to keep clean," Keck says. "We looked at what was around; most were ugly and had design flaws. They had thin metal tops with up-curled edges, where sugar and dirt would accumulate. The threads where you screwed on the top were exposed—another grime collecting spot. The metal pouring flaps were thin and poorly positioned; steam from the coffee caused sugar to clump at the spout. The glass bodies had vertical ridges and bases that protruded, which increased cleaning time."

So Keck and Craig came up with something sturdy and inexpensive to produce, giving it the modernist shape of what was then the future.

"We engineered it to be completely smooth all around, so there's nowhere for sugar or dirt to hide," he says. "Our lid was heavier, die-cast metal and covered the threads. Our flap was heavy enough to knock sugar off the hole after each pour."

The designers had no idea what a sensation their sugar shaker would cause. "Sales exploded," Keck says. "Our client was able to retire on the profits from that one thing."

LOS ANGELES TIMES
Consider this humble sugar shaker, a staple of kitchens and coffee shops across the land.

Make your noisy home hush

By MARY ELLEN SLAYTER
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

Noise complaints have been around as long as we've had neighbors.

But these days, the clatter in our homes is often of our own making, a function of modern preferences for open floor plans, high ceilings, two-story foyers, lofts, and an ever-growing number of appliances and media devices.

"We're starting to move our noise sources closer to us," said Les Blomberg, executive director of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse, a nonprofit advocacy group in Vermont. "You have the refrigerator, the dishwasher right where you're going to be watching TV or playing games with your family. We've moved our washer and dryer upstairs. It's more convenient that way, but now you have to design for this."

The popularity of wood and tile floors can also contribute, as they transmit more sound than wall-to-wall carpet.

It's definitely something people should pay attention to, said Sharon Beamer, associate director for audiology professional practices at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. "The effects of noise on hearing have been well documented over the years."

If you're building or renovating, think carefully about how you will use spaces, said Michael Ermann, an associate professor in the School of Architecture and Design at Virginia Tech and head of the school's Architectural Acoustics Laboratory.

Introduce buffer zones, separating the noisy areas from the quiet ones, he said. "After the house is built, it's infinitely more difficult."

But that doesn't mean people living in existing homes have to accept the racket. Noise can be greatly reduced in many homes, experts on acoustical architecture say.

Different problems require different approaches, and many of them "don't require any extra money, just extra care and thought," Blomberg said.

When you buy appliances, make noise levels part of your selection criteria. There are quieter air conditioners and furnaces, and you can do a lot with dishwashers, said Blomberg, whose organization rates appliances for noisiness. Even bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans come in quieter versions.

If you rely on window air-conditioning units, he said, two smaller units generally make less noise than one big one.

If your noise problem stems from the combination of a loud appliance and an open floor plan, consider replacing the problem appliance, Blomberg said. "Even though it sounds expensive, it will be the cheapest solution."

For other problems, there are a variety of products that can help reduce the transmission of noise. Sound from small appliances in the kitchen such as blenders can easily be muffled by placing inexpensive rubber pads under them when you use them, Beamer said.

One option for limiting sound in family rooms is a product such as Solserene, a stretch fabric that is applied to the ceiling, said Harry Alter, senior acoustical engineer at Owens Corning, which makes Solserene. "Reducing the echo tends to dampen many noises which otherwise would bounce around the walls and hardwood floors, causing the home to be much louder," Alter said.

For many homeowners, however, such specialty products are overkill, said Gary Erlich, principal of Hush Acoustics in Falls Church, Va. "The science of isolating sound in walls isn't that complicated. You don't need fancy materials."

Instead, to control the din in your great room, you could borrow a trick that Beamer said is used frequently in large classrooms: Hang a piece of cloth, such as a quilt, from the ceiling.

Another common noise complaint is the sound of footfalls carrying through the house. Impact noises such as this can be particularly problematic, Ermann said. "Such noise can travel much further in a building, and it can be really difficult to mitigate."

The best way to control that type of noise is by damping it at the source, he said. Plush carpet on padding is the most effective way.

If you're troubled by the sound of voices carrying, take another look at your furniture layout. Arrange couches and chairs to minimize how loudly you have to speak to each other. "Just move your chair around to maintain face-to-face communication," Beamer said.

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Lint buildup can fuel dryer fire

By SAMANTHA MAZZOTTA
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Q: I read another columnist recently who warned about keeping dryer vents clean and free of lint, in order to prevent a house fire. Since then, I've cleaned the lint trap after every load, and had my son clean behind the dryer (as he's strong enough to move the appliance). Is there any other area we should clean to make sure all excess dryer lint is gone? -- Gladys K., Trenton, N.J.

A: You've done a great job in keeping the area around the dryer free of extra lint. Built-up lint can catch fire easily if it contacts a heat source, such as overheated dryer parts or a stray spark.

Another area that needs to be cleaned is the exhaust vent and duct, all the way to the outside of the house, if possible. Unplug the dryer before cleaning, detach the duct from the back of the dryer, and vacuum the vent and inside the duct using the vacuum hose attachment.

Gardus Inc., which sells a dryer duct-cleaning appliance called the LintEater System, recommends cleaning the vent and duct four times a year. The company also suggests checking the exterior vent for squirrel or bird nests, and making sure the exterior flap is open when the dryer is on, and closes when the dryer is off.

Other tips:

■ Install a smoke alarm near the dryer—test it monthly and replace the battery each year.

■ Don't put rubber-backed bath mats, foam-padded bras or cloth soaked in oil, gas or other flammable chemicals into the dryer.

■ Don't run the dryer when asleep or not at home.

HOME TIP: Clean your dryer's lint screen/trap after every load, and periodically wash with soap and water to completely clear the screen.

Send questions or home-repair tips to homeguru2000@hotmail.com, or write This Is a Hammer, c/o King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475.

KITCHEN MAGIC

Broiled Brown-Sugar Bananas

A sweet, satisfying dessert with just four basic ingredients.

PREP: 5 minutes
COOK: 5 minutes
MAKES: 4 servings

4 ripe medium bananas, unpeeled
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon lower-fat margarine
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Preheat broiler. Cut each unpeeled banana lengthwise almost in half, being careful not to cut all the way through and leaving 1 inch uncut at banana end.

2. In cup, with fork, blend together remaining ingredients. Place bananas, cut side up, on rack in broiling pan. Spoon brown-sugar mixture into split bananas.

3. Place pan in broiler at closest position to source of heat; broil bananas 5 minutes or until browned. Serve bananas in skins, and use spoon to scoop out fruit.

Sticky Toffee Pudding

In England, the term "pudding" refers to many kinds of desserts. This pudding—all the rage in Great Britain and Australia—is a moist cake with a sticky broiled-on brown-sugar topping.

1 cup dates, chopped and pitted
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup sugar
10 tablespoon (1 1/4 sticks) margarine, softened
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup heavy cream
Whipped cream

1. Grease 13-inch by 9-inch broiler-safe baking pan. In medium bowl, combine dates, baking soda and 1 1/2 cups boiling water; let stand 15 minutes.

2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. In large bowl, with mixer at medium speed, beat sugar and 6 tablespoons margarine or butter until creamy. Add egg and vanilla; beat until blended. At low speed, beat in flour and baking powder. Add date mixture and beat until combined (batter will be very thin). Pour batter into baking pan. Bake 30 minutes or until golden and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

3. Meanwhile, in 2-quart saucepan, heat brown sugar, heavy cream and remaining 4 tablespoons margarine or butter to boiling over medium heat; boil 1 minute. Set aside.

4. Turn oven control to broil. Spread brown-sugar mixture evenly over top of hot dessert. Place pan in broiler at closest position to source of heat; broil until bubbly, about 30 seconds. Cool in pan on wire rack 15 minutes. Serve warm with whipped cream if you like. Makes 12 servings.

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Waking up a bedroom

By LIZ SEYMOUR
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

I hate to admit it, but I have no love for my bedroom.

The furniture is dreary and mismatched. The closet is dark and messy. The room lacks light, organization and even a headboard for the bed. It's so uninviting that I use it only for sleeping and paying bills.

My husband and I bought our house seven years ago. Since then, we've gutted the kitchen, screened in a porch, renovated a basement playroom and decorated bedrooms for our two children. But our own room—why bother? No one sees it but us, so it ranks dead last on the list of home improvement priorities, after any first-floor room seen by visitors.

"Everyone always seems to put it off," says Karen Bengel, a Washington area designer who did no such thing. Her bedroom has warm beige walls, a modern four-poster bed, linen and cotton sheets and a jolt of color from red pillows. It's a mistake, she and others say, to give short shrift to a space intended for relaxation and comfort.

So why not give some thought to the room in the house that, really, should inspire affection?

Home staffers asked designers, color pros, organizers, shop owners and others for advice on quick ways to perk up a bedroom. It turns out it really doesn't take much—paint the walls, change the lighting, rearrange the furniture or commit to 10 minutes of daily tidying—to create a room you will love.

Tips to wake up your bedroom

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

THE WASHINGTON POST
Treat yourself to a new laundry basket like a collapsible Square Crunch Can.

Ultimate indulgence: an armoire turned into a bedside kitchenette. In her home, designer and author Chris Madden outfitted a JCPenney armoire of her own design with a small fridge, microwave and coffee maker.

A throw blanket adds color and an instant sense of cozy. Cashmere is lovely, but affordable fleece can be just as comforting. All-cotton charmers from Dash and Albert Rug Co. are $58. See www.dashandalbert.com for retailers.

Fresh flowers are even nicer than candles. Place a bud vase on a nightstand and fill it with a single red rose. Or two, or three.

Why not give some thought to waking up the bedroom's design? The Cadillac of bedside water jugs: Alfi's Opal chrome wicker-covered thermal carafe.

THE WASHINGTON POST

A breakfast tray can brighten much more than breakfast. A sturdy one will hold your laptop, the newspaper and a midnight snack. They're especially handy if the tray lifts off.

Clear off the nightstand, leaving just a lamp, clock radio, water and something to read on top. Stow tissues and other necessities in a drawer or nearby basket. A Moonbeam clock ($39.50) is from L.L. Bean (www.llbean.com).

Wall-mounted swing-arm lamps foster reading in bed but take up zero table space.

Rearrange your furniture. Consider, for example, the sensible advice that a shared bed should not be pushed against a wall but positioned so it can be approached from each side. This makes for a "nourishing relationship," according to "The Feng Shui Doctor," by Paul Darby.

The Cadillac of bedside water jugs: Alfi's Opal chrome wicker-covered thermal carafe, modeled after those used in 1918 Pullman railroad cars, keeps water chilled all night. It's $216 at www.allmodern.com.

Don't skimp on bedding basics: mattress cover, sheets, blankets, bed skirt. Pillows should be replaced every few years. You'll sleep better for it. Treat yourself to a new laundry basket, too, like a collapsible Square Crunch Can, $19.99 at Container Store (www.containerstore.com).

Keep paper and pencil handy for jotting down big thoughts in the middle of the night.

THE WASHINGTON POST

Fresh paint makes the most impact for the money. Designer favorites for bedrooms include Benjamin Moore's whisper-soft Palladian Blue, Farrow & Ball's Hound Lemon and New Age, a pale purple-gray, also by Benjamin Moore.

A headboard instantly upgrades a room, making it look and feel more pulled together. An upholstered headboard goes even further, adding warmth, softness and comfort for reading in bed. A Newport headboard (starting at $925) is from Williams-Sonoma Home (www.wshome.com).

Simple drapery panels framing a window can soften light and hard angles, even when used with blinds or shades. Silk drapery panels from Restoration Hardware (www.restorationhardware.com) start at $199 each.

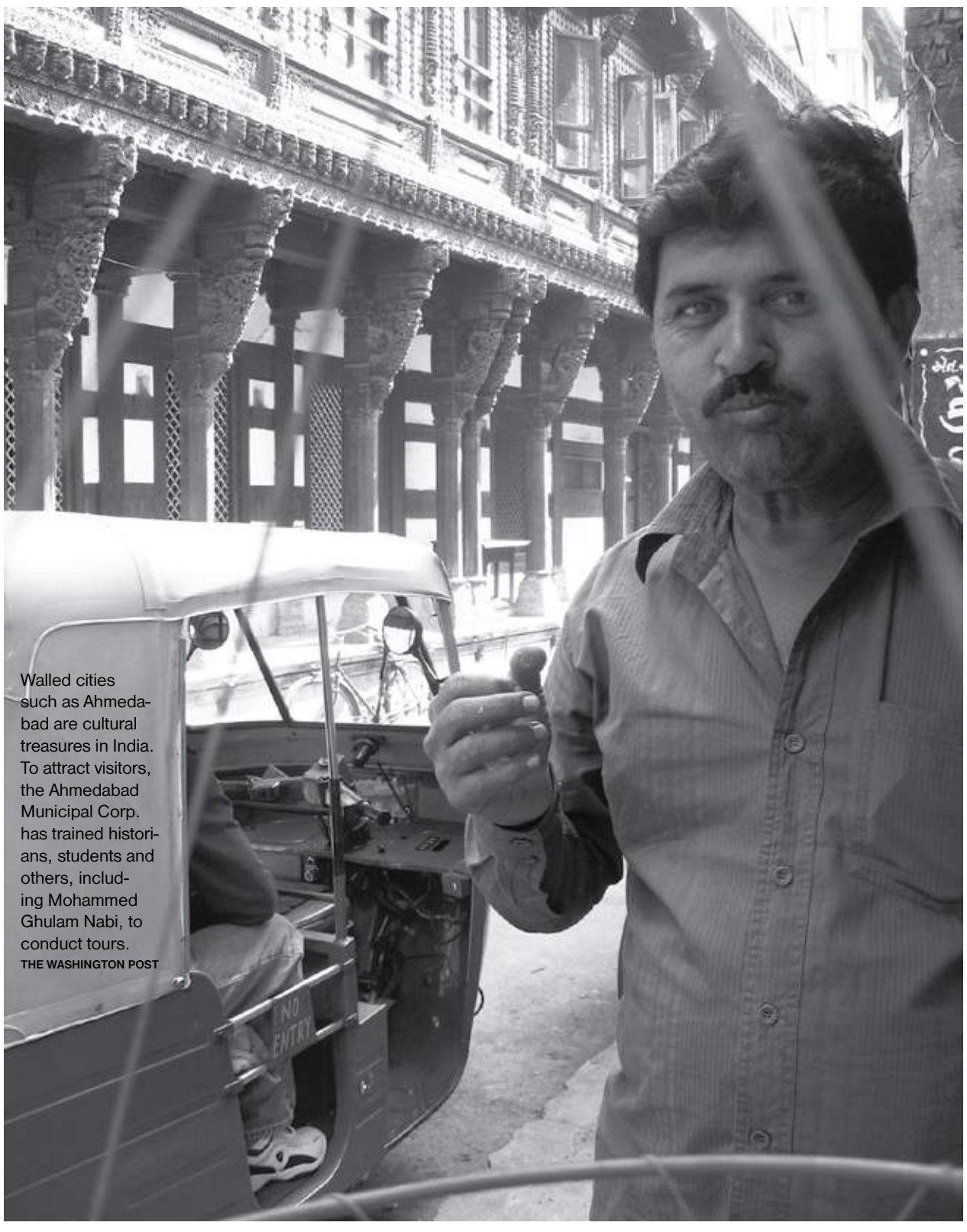
Light dimmers are a sure and simple way to set the mood. They also save energy, which further lifts the spirit. Starting at $10 from Lutron Electronics (www.lutron.com).

Keep paper and pencil handy for jotting down big thoughts in the middle of the night. Who wouldn't like a Florentine paper memo box and pencil cup from New York's Il Papiro (212-288-9330). Memo box $65, cup $35, pencils $3.50.

Two hours in an Indian rickshaw

By EMILY WAX
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

AHMEDABAD, India—Auto rickshaw driver Mohammed Ghulam Nabi, 46, usually laughs and shrugs cheerfully as he weaves through the bustle of this walled city, maneuvering around open-air food stalls, straight-razor shave stands and slow-moving elephants.



Walled cities such as Ahmedabad are cultural treasures in India. To attract visitors, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corp. has trained historians, students and others, including Mohammed Ghulam Nabi, to conduct tours.
THE WASHINGTON POST

"There is so much hustle and bustle and life happening in the city," Nabi shouts. "I learned everything you need to know from my training with the city. But I also don't need the schooling. I know this city. Go, get in the rickshaw."

But he's not in his usual patient mood. That's because it's 2 p.m., the start of Nabi's "rickshaw heritage tour," and he's all business. At the moment, he's stuck in a particularly nasty and distinctly Indian traffic jam: luxury cars, donkey carts, cows, towering buses, bicycles and tea salesmen all trying to squeeze onto one narrow road.

Nabi throws his hands up, then jumps out of his rickshaw to push a stalled rickshaw out of the way.

"It's the heritage tour!" he booms, back in his rickshaw and proudly gunning the engine from the wide handlebars. "I'm teaching about the ancient cultures of Ahmedabad. Let's go."

As a guide through some of the country's unsung history, Nabi is part of a larger movement in ancient Ahmedabad to draw attention to all that is to be found here: a fading but still glorious mix of delicately carved stone mosques, fairy tale-like Hindu temples, 15th-century forts and twisting alleyways.

Many of India's walled cities have been abandoned over the years by the middle and upper classes, who run off to high-rise apartment complexes in the suburbs. But the walled cities are still cultural treasures. To attract visitors to this one in western India, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corp.has trained historians, students and others—including Nabi—to conduct tours.

"There is so much hustle and bustle and life happening in the city," Nabi shouts. "I learned everything you need to know from my training with the city. But I also don't need the schooling. I know this city. Go, get in the rickshaw."

It's now 2:20 p.m. and the first stop is the Kalupur Swaminarayan temple. Green and yellow sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses, their bodies fitted in opulent dress, cover the structure.

"So fantastic," gushes Nabi. "I'm Muslim and I love this place."

He pats his well-oiled mustache and smiles as hundreds of pigeons soar across a smoggy sky.

Ahmedabad dates to the 10th century. This temple dates to the 19th century.

Because Nabi can't read, he's fuzzy on exact dates. But he was picked to run the tours because of his interest, his charisma and his ability to make educated guesses. (He's usually off by 100 years, but a visitor can read the plaques and consult the guidebooks later.)

"History comes from the heart," he says, touching his chest. "Not books."

By 2:45 p.m. he's back in the rickshaw and rattling through neighborhoods dotted by Jain temples. They have archways carved with dancers, symbolizing the music and joy of one of India's oldest religions.

From his rickshaw, Nabi points out heavy wooden doors with flower petals in finely carved patterns. He weaves around freshly laundered saris billowing from clotheslines and barrels through a neighborhood cricket match and a schoolyard where chairs are being set up for a math lesson. He waves everyone out of the way, yelling out, "I need to get through for my heritage tour."

He stops in one quiet quarter of the city and greets the local personalities.

One of them is Manjual L. Datwal, 57, who is ironing pile after pile of clothing with a charcoal-powered iron. "She's the most famous laundry woman in Ahmedabad because she does the clothes the better, old-fashioned way," Nabi says, making sure that she hears him.

She giggles and tells him to show her visitors some historic sites. Nabi flirts, swooning that she is a "historic treasure." She blushes.

He jumps back in the rickshaw and at 3:10 p.m. races past crowded markets selling yams, coconut oil, freshly churned balls of milk-based sweets and silver necklaces. By 3:30 p.m. he pulls up to Rani no Hajiro, a mausoleum situated in the courtyard of an ordinary neighborhood.

It's closed. But a neighborhood woman drops Nabi the key from her third-story window. Inside, the queens of several sultans reaching back to the 15th century are buried. Despite the hubbub outside, the tomb is serene.

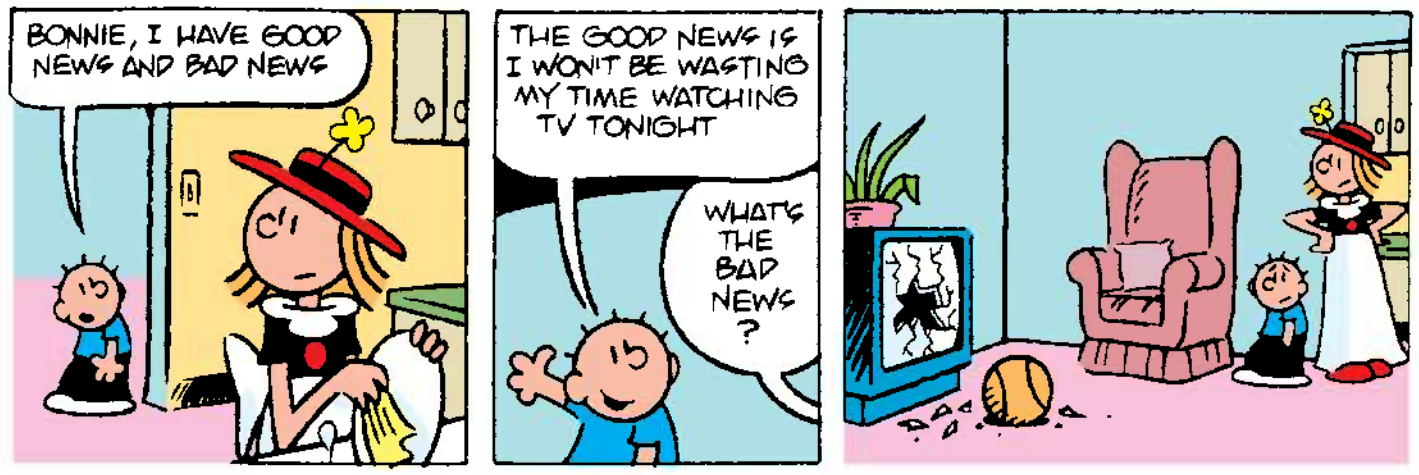
By 4 p.m. Nabi's rickshaw pulls up to the historic residence of the Mehta family. Without ringing the doorbell, he saunters right through their kitchen and courtyard.

A family elder is in his underwear. Children are playing marbles. Others are napping. Some awake and peer out curiously as the rickshaw driver points out the fading but beautiful Italian tiles and rainwater harvesting system.

Waving a calendar that promotes the tour, Nabi looks serious. "It's the heritage tour," he says, as members of the family smile and wave him in. "I'm on official business."

Bob Weber Jr.'s Slylock Fox and Comics for Kids

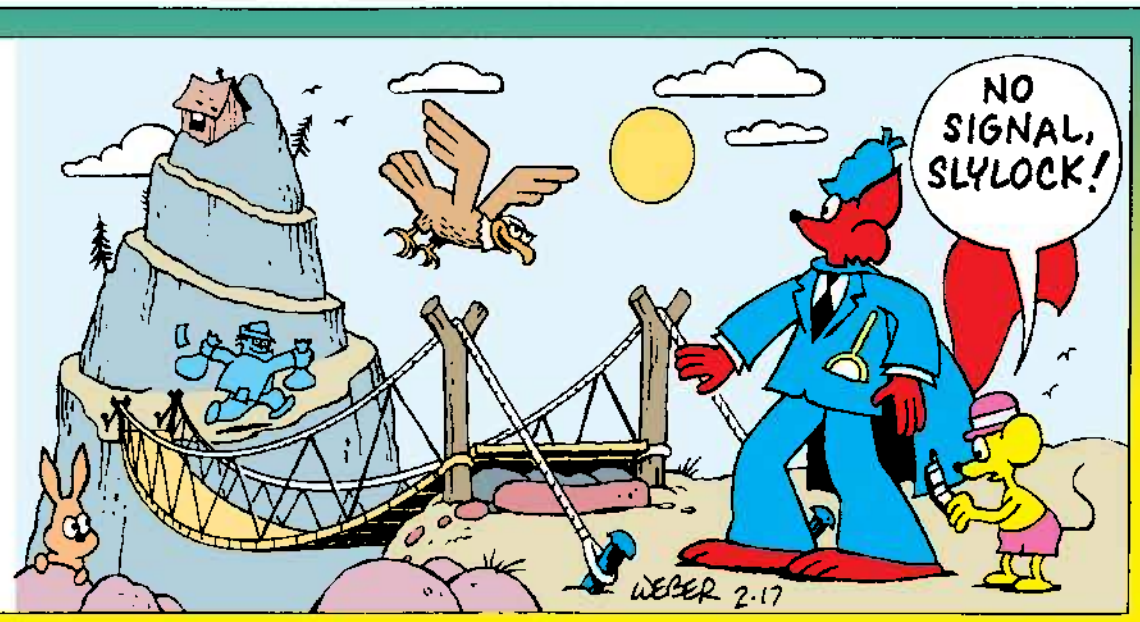
Bonnie and Boo Boo



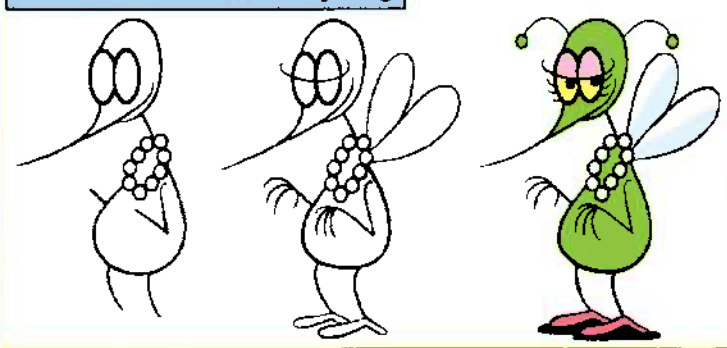
Slylock Fox followed bank robber Harry Ape. Slylock wants to contact the police, but since there is no phone signal, he must leave. Before going, he wants to cut the bridge loose and trap the crook on the mountain peak. How will Slylock sever the ropes without a knife?

Solution -- Slylock will use the sun and his magnifying glass to burn the ropes.

For more Slylock Fox brain bogglers go to www.kidcartoonists.com



HOW TO DRAW a lady bug



YOUR DRAWING

Our featured artist is Kristin, age 13, of Gainesville, TX

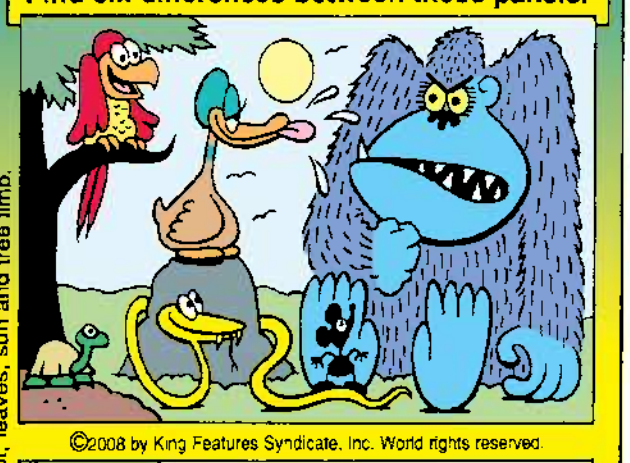
Send your drawing to www.kidcartoonists.com

Mount Everest is the highest mountain. Which of the following is the second highest mountain?

a) Kilimanjaro
b) K2
c) Mount McKinley
d) Mont Blanc
e) Magic Mountain

Answer -- b) K2, located in Pakistan, is 28,253 feet.

Find six differences between these panels.



Answer -- Tooth, snake's tongue, parrot, leaves, sun and tree limb.

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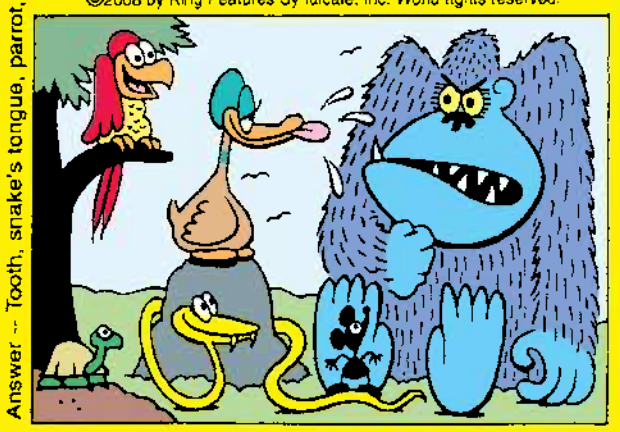
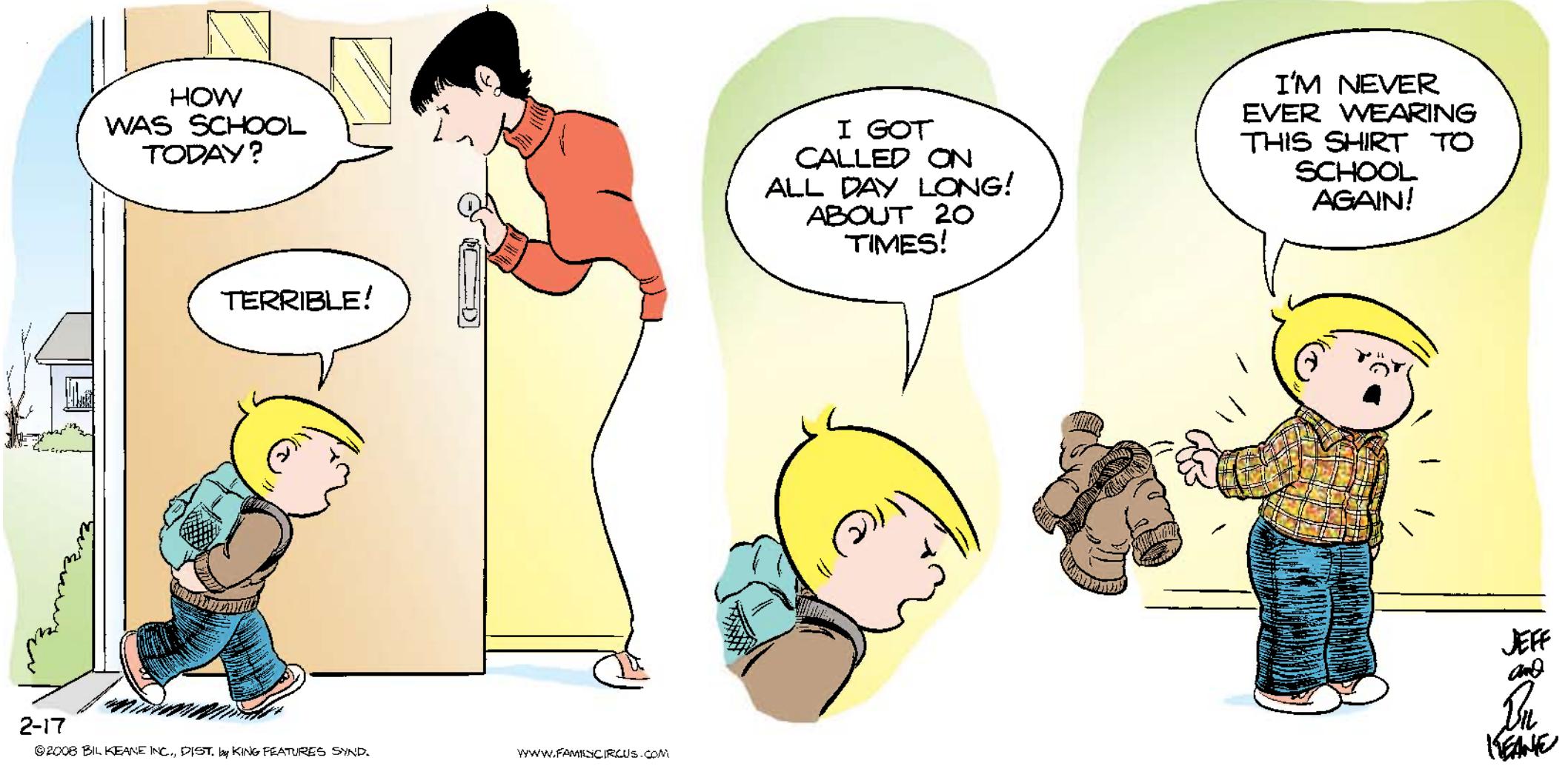


New! The fourth **Find the six differences** collection is here. Send $4 (check/money order in U.S. funds made payable to King Features) with your name and address to **Six Differences No. 4,** P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475

THE FAMILY CIRCUS®

By Bil Keane


HOW WAS SCHOOL TODAY?
TERRIBLE!
I GOT CALLED ON ALL DAY LONG! ABOUT 20 TIMES!
I'M NEVER EVER WEARING THIS SHIRT TO SCHOOL AGAIN!
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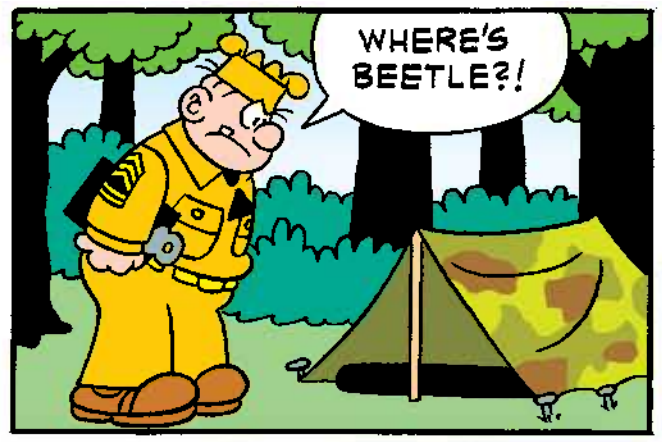

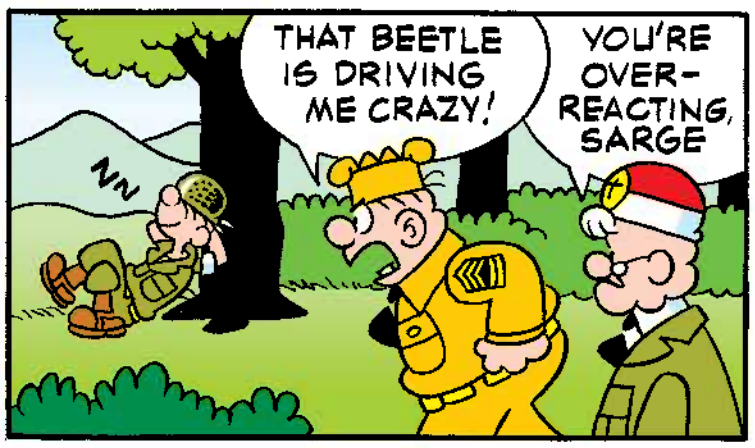

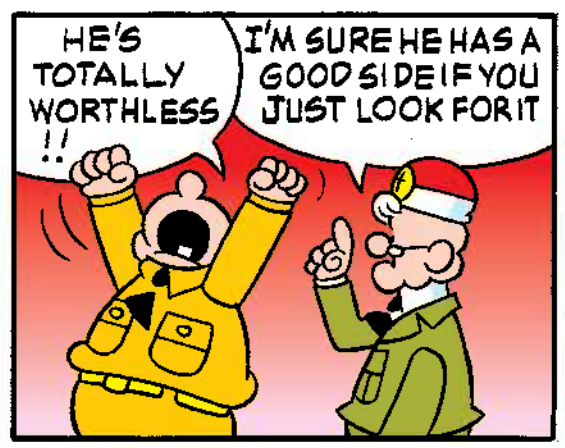

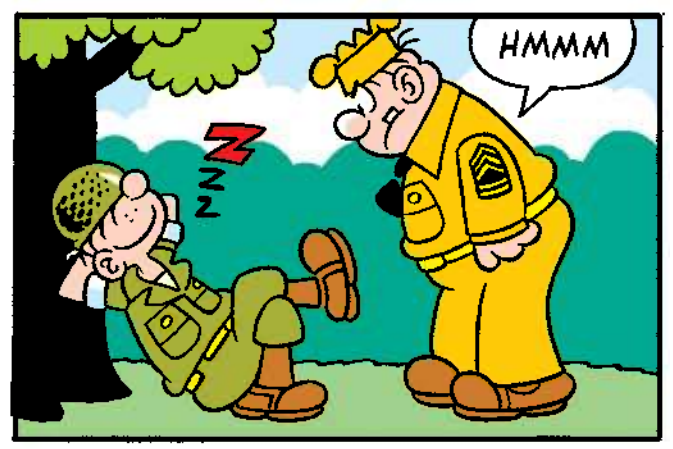

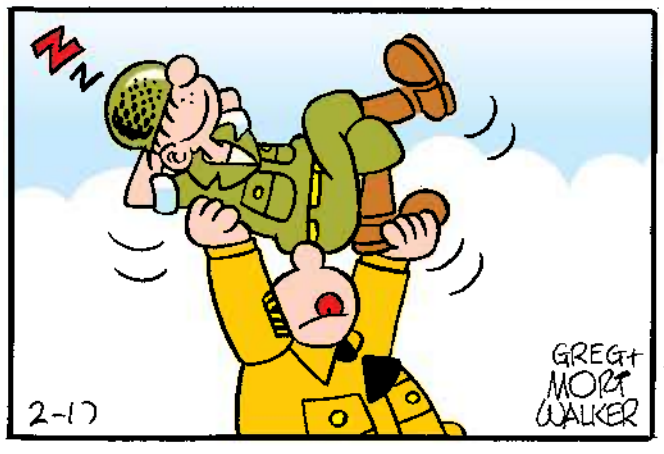

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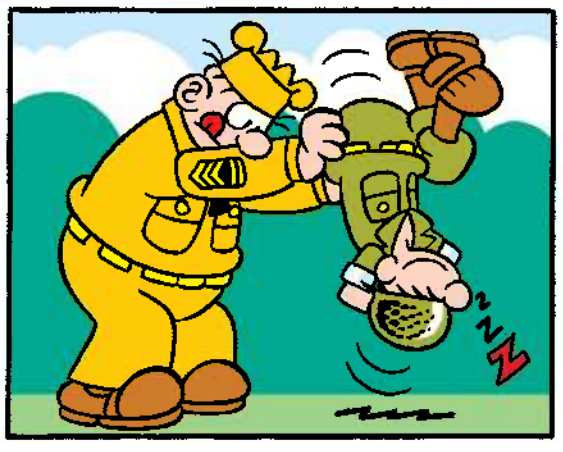

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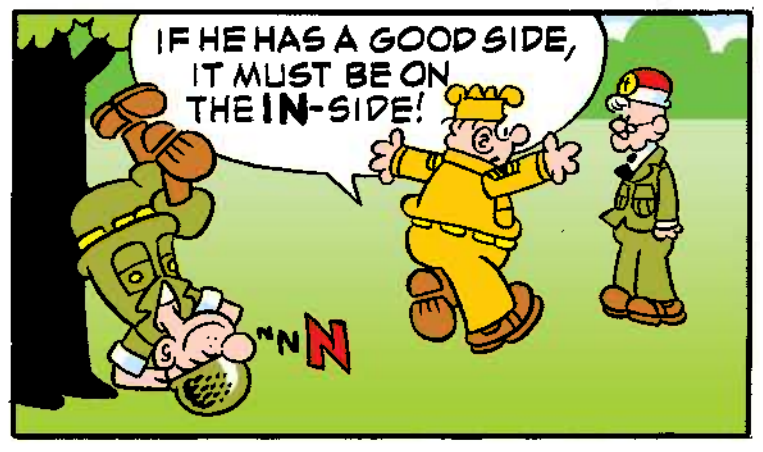

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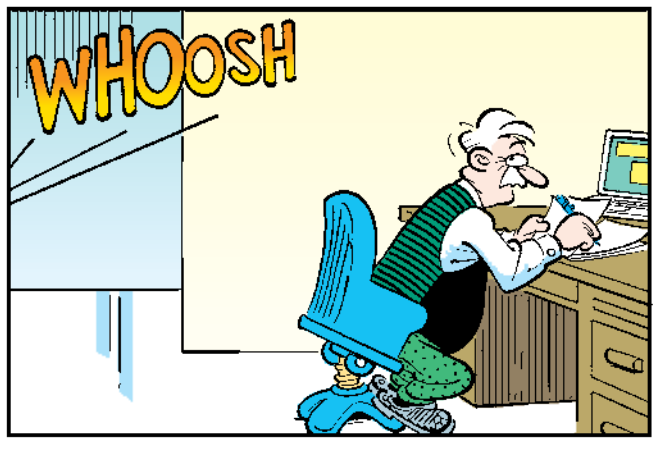

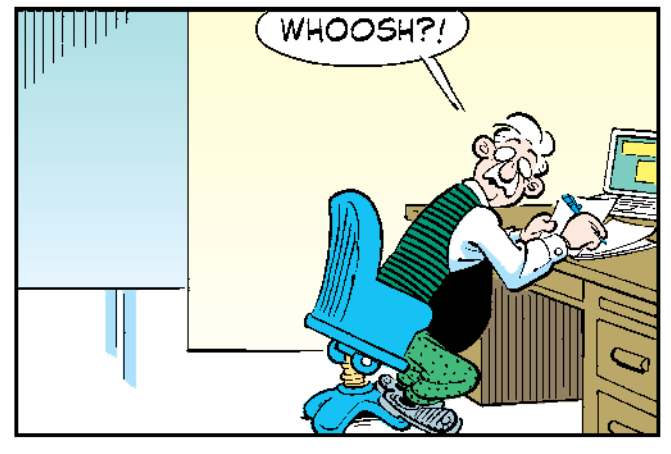

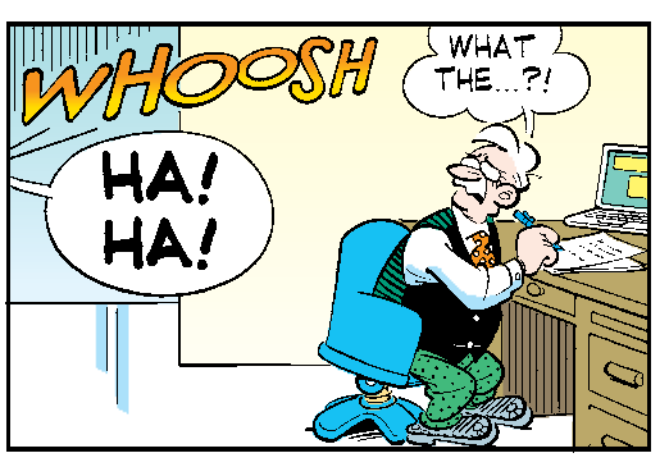

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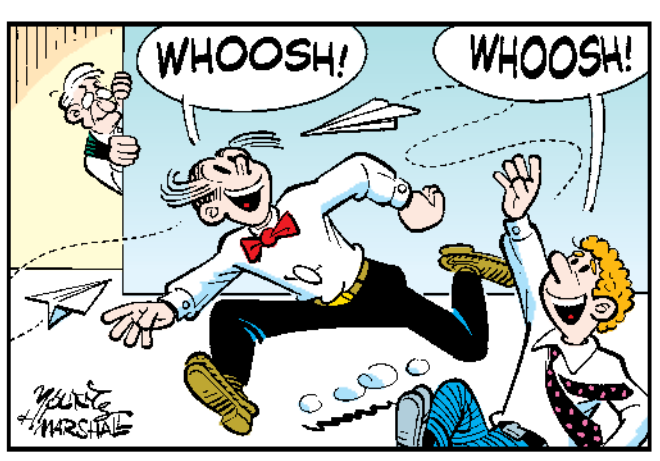

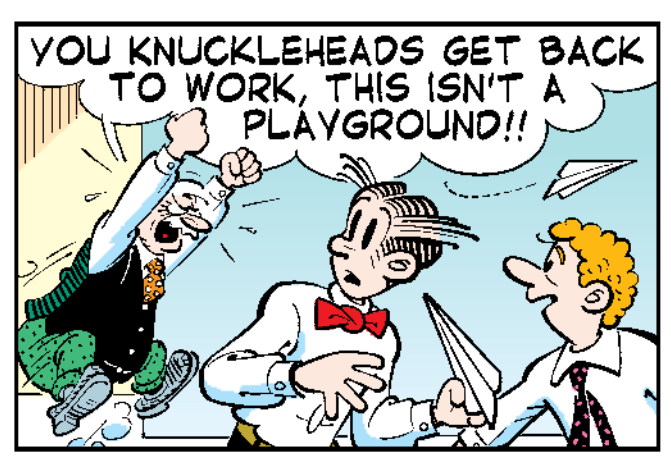

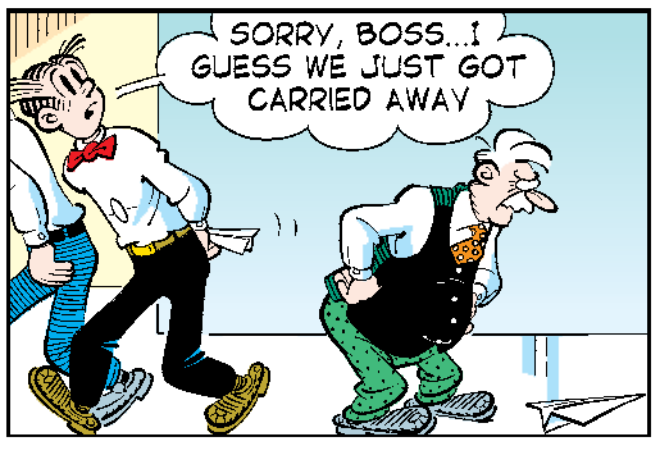

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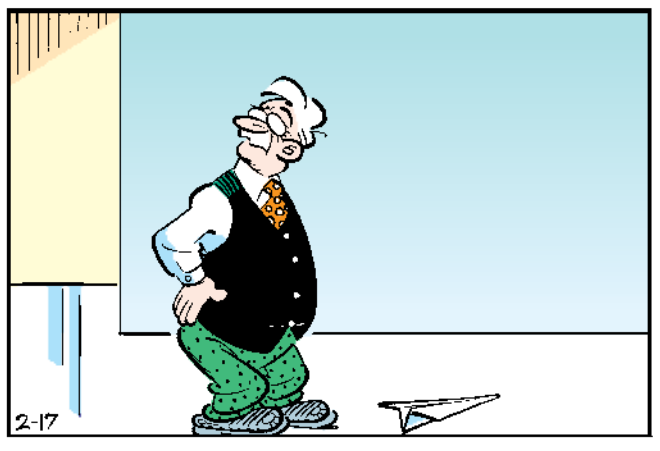
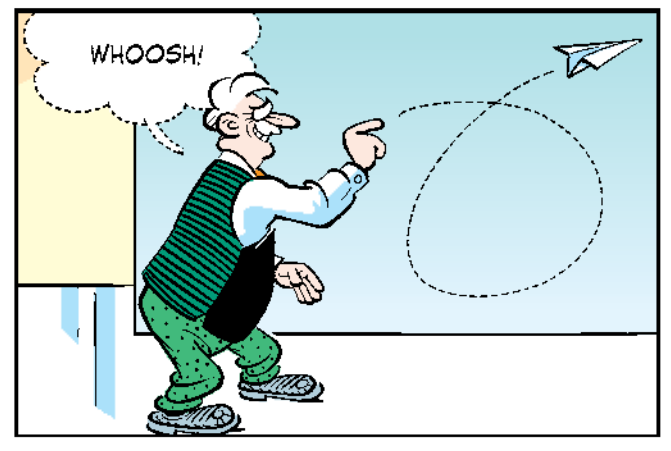
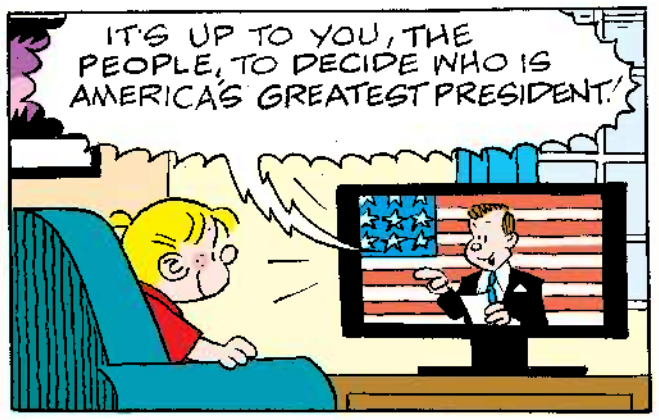
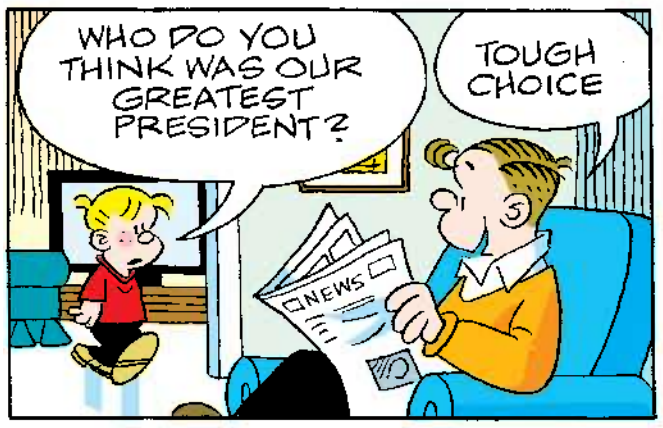


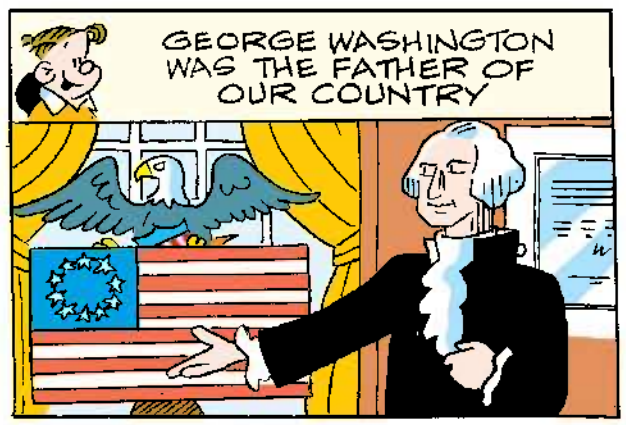


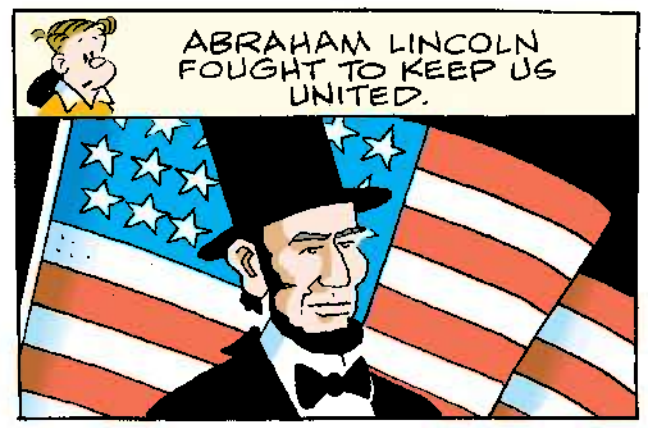
Hi and Lois

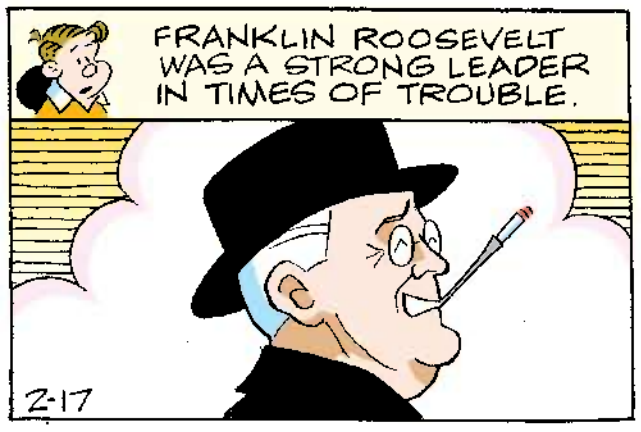
by BRIAN and GREG WALKER







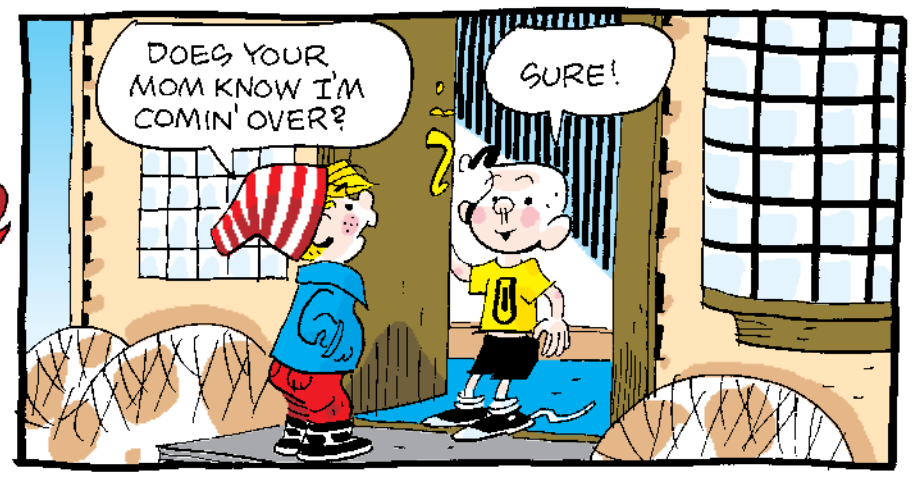


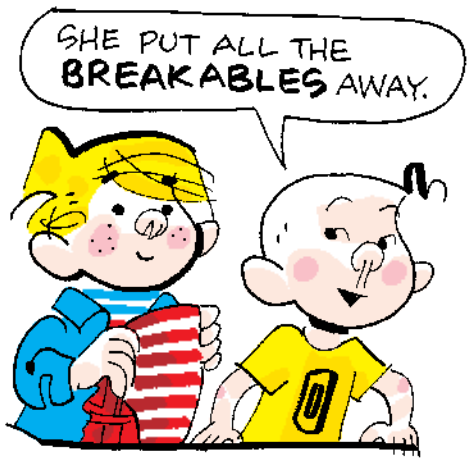


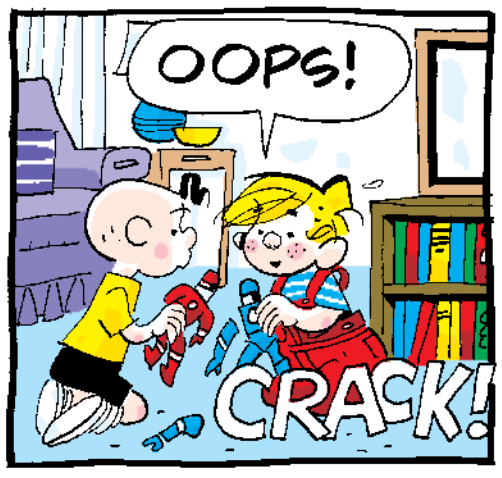
BUT THEY WERE ALL FROM THE PAST.
IT TAKES A LONG TIME AFTER A PRESIDENT GETS OUT OF OFFICE TO EVALUATE HIS LEGACY!
CHANCE BROWNE

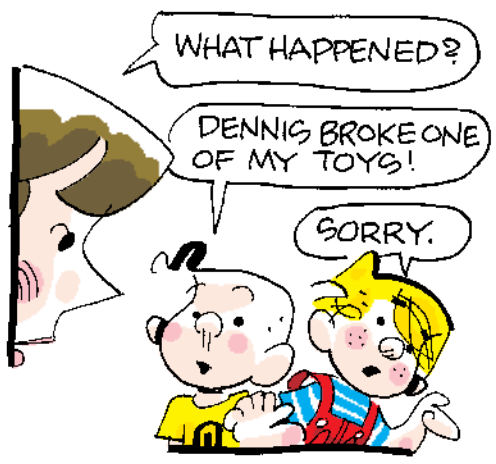
Hank Ketcham's Dennis the Menace

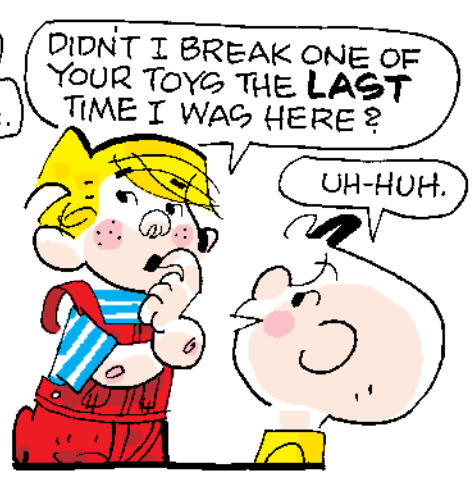
Gimme A Break!

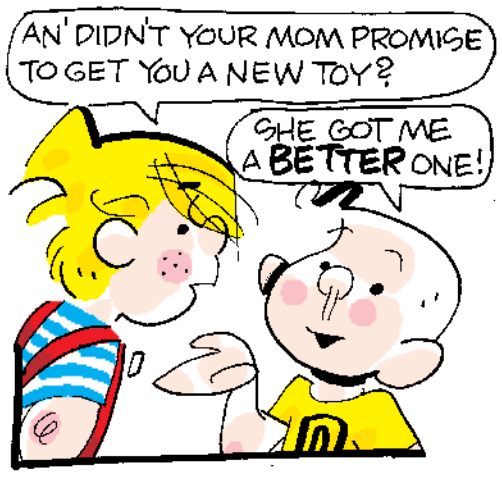


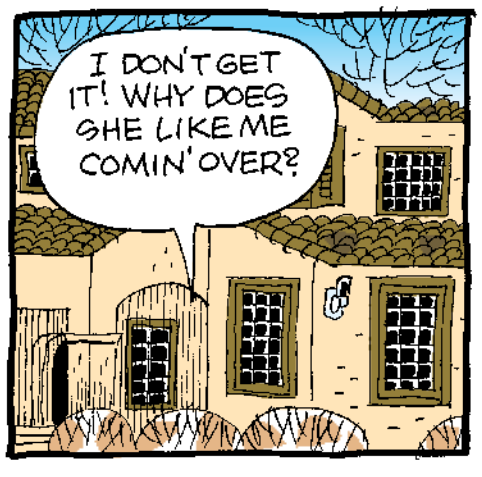


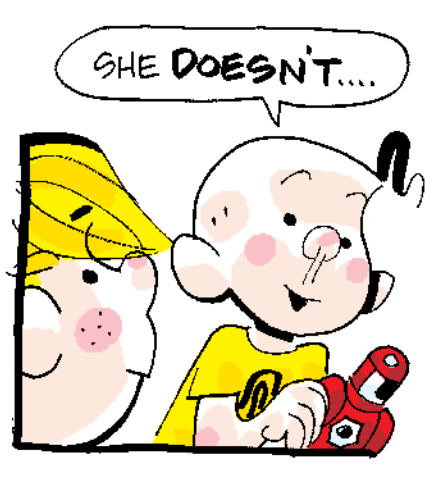


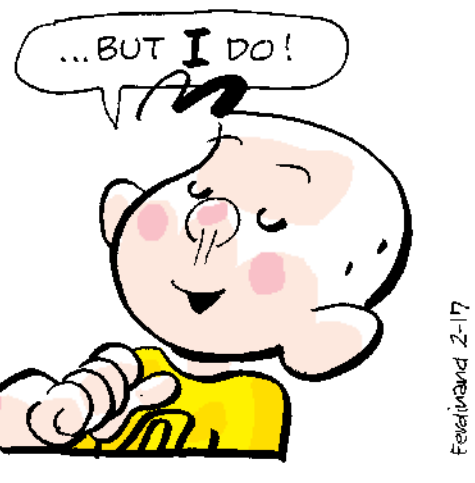












BABY BLUES™
BY RICK KIRKMAN & JERRY SCOTT
JUST BECAUSE A GUY COATS HIMSELF IN VASELINE, SLIDES DOWN THE SLIDE ONTO THE TRAMPOLINE, BOUNCES OVER TO A ROPE, DROPS ONTO A SWING, HURLS HIMSELF THROUGH THE AIR ONTO A LONG SHEET OF WET PLASTIC AND SLIDES THIRTY FEET INTO A TRASH BAG FILLED WITH BUBBLE-WRAP DOES NOT MEAN HE'S HYPERACTIVE!
JUST GET IN THE BATHTUB, HAMMIE.
YOU'RE RIGHT... MORE LIKE HYPER-WEIRD!
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Salome's Stars

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) It could be risky to push for a project you believe in but others are wary of. Never mind. If you trust your facts, follow your courageous Aries heart and go with it.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Your enthusiasm sparks renewed interest in a workplace project that once seemed headed for deletion. Support from supervisors helps you make all necessary changes.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) A colleague might be a bit too contrary when your ideas are being discussed in the workplace. A demand for an explanation could produce some surprises all around.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Try to avoid distractions at a time when maintaining stability in a fluid situation is essential. There'll be time enough later for the Moon Child to enjoy some well-earned fun and games.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Stop wasting energy licking your wounded pride. Instead, put the lessons you learned from that upsetting experience to good use in an upcoming opportunity.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) You love being busy. But try not to make more work for yourself than you need to. Get help so that you don't wind up tackling tasks that are better left to others.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Your usually balanced way of assessing situations could be compromised by some so-called new facts. Check them out before making any shift in judgment.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) You might feel angry over an unexpected shift in attitude by someone you trusted. But this could soon turn in your favor as more surprising facts come out.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Love rules everywhere for all amorous Archers, single or attached. It's also a good time to restore friendships that might have frayed over the years.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) It's not always easy for the proud Goat to forgive past slights. But clearing the air could help establish a better climate for that important upcoming venture.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Good news: Your skillful handling of a recent matter has won admiration from someone who could be influential in any upcoming decisions involving you.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) You continue to welcome new friends into the widening circle of people whom you hold dear. One of those newcomers might soon have something special to tell you.

BORN THIS WEEK: You love nature and inspire others to follow your example of concern for the planet's well-being.

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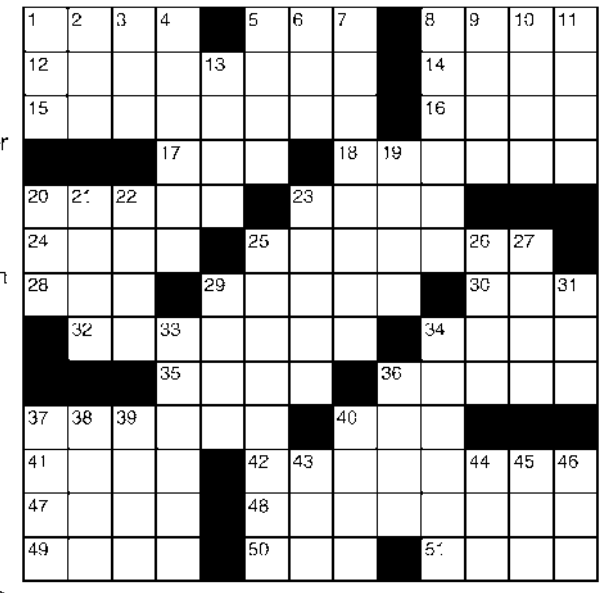
King Crossword



ACROSS
1 Church service
5 8-Down's noise?
8 Gift concealer
12 Skin cream ingredient
14 Count counterpart
15 Menu section
16 Largest of the seven
17 Noah's construction
18 Glide
20 Scale
23 Sotto — (Lat.)
24 Staffer
25 Verbally abused
28 Actor Benicio — Toro
29 Under a bad spell
30 Thee
32 Convey
34 Sensed
35 — out (supplemented)
36 Supermarket division
37 James or Jennifer
40 "It's cold!"
41 Settled down
42 Underlined
47 Sandwich shop
48 On the windward side
49 Vend
50 Depressed
51 Without (Fr.)

DOWN
1 Angry
2 Stout cousin
3 "Mayday!"
4 Big Bird's street
5 Fringe benefit
6 Scrap
7 Nisan commemoration
8 Monkey's pursuer
9 Impetuous
10 "Nessun Dorma" is one
11 Work alternative
13 Predicate word
19 Hydrochloric —
20 Scoundrel
21 Told tales
22 Between jobs
23 Annoyed
25 About-face
26 Spud's buds
27 Barbie, e.g.
29 Forest trek
31 Multipurpose truck
33 Soup legume
34 Gold-medal wins
36 Geographical statistic
37 Wanders
38 Opposite of 48-Across
39 Small stream
40 Create in a cauldron
43 Pair
44 — Na Na
45 Poetic time
46 Hosp. VIPs

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top ten

Happiest Countries

1. Denmark
2. Switzerland
3. Austria
4. Iceland
5. Bahamas
6. Finland
7. Sweden
8. Bhutan
9. Brunei
10. Canada

Source: University of Leicester

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KING CROSSWORD LAST SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

A	N	T		G	Y	R	E		B	O	O	T
B	O	Y		L	E	A	P		R	I	P	A
C	A	P	R	I	A	T	I		A	L	S	O
S	H	O	O	T	S		T	A	N			
			A	C	T		H	U	D	S	O	N
W	A	T	C	H		S	E	X		E	W	E
H	U	S	H		K	I	T		M	E	E	T
I	R	A		F	A	X		C	U	R	D	S
G	A	R	N	E	R		R	A	F			
			I	D	A		I	N	T	I	M	E
B	R	I	G		J	E	N	N	I	F	E	R
O	U	C	H		A	R	G	O		F	R	O
A	B	E	T		N	E	S	T		Y	E	S

United States

Study: Lack of MRAPs cost Marine lives

WASHINGTON (AP)—Hundreds of U.S. Marines have been killed or injured by roadside bombs in Iraq because Marine Corps bureaucrats refused an urgent request in 2005 from battlefield commanders for blast-resistant vehicles, an internal military study concludes.

The study, written by a civilian Marine Corps official and obtained by The Associated Press, accuses the service of "gross mismanagement" that delayed deliveries of the mine-resistant, ambush-protected trucks for more than two years.

Cost was a driving factor in the decision to turn down the request for the so-called MRAPs, according to the study. Stateside authorities saw the hulking vehicles, which can cost as much as a $1 million each, as a financial threat to programs aimed at developing lighter vehicles that were years from being fielded.

After Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared the MRAP (pronounced M-rap) the Pentagon's No. 1 acquisition priority in May 2007, the trucks began to be shipped to Iraq in large quantities.

The vehicles weigh as much as 40 tons and have been effective at protecting American forces from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the weapon of choice for Iraqi insurgents. Only four U.S. troops have been killed by such bombs while riding in MRAPs; three of those deaths occurred in older versions of the vehicles.

The study's author, Franz J. Gayl, catalogs what he says were flawed decisions and missteps by midlevel managers in Marine Corps offices that occurred well before Gates replaced Donald Rumsfeld in December 2006.

Among the findings in the Jan. 22 study:

■ Budget and procurement managers failed to recognize the damage being done by IEDs in late 2004 and early 2005 and were convinced the best solution was adding more armor to the less-sturdy Humvees the Marines were using. Humvees, even those with extra layers of steel, proved incapable of blunting the increasingly powerful explosives planted by insurgents.

■ An urgent February 2005 request for MRAPs got lost in bureaucracy. It was signed by then-Brig. Gen. Dennis Hejlik, who asked for 1,169 of the vehicles. The Marines could not continue to take "serious and grave casualties" caused by IEDs when a solution was commercially available, wrote Hejlik, who was a commander in western Iraq from June 2004 to February 2005.

AP

MATING TIME

Mei Lan, Zoo Atlanta's giant panda cub, plays in her enclosure, Thursday, Feb. 14, 2008, at Zoo Atlanta in Atlanta. The zoo is hoping to hear the pitter patter of little paws again. Now that Mei Lan is old enough to be weaned from her mother, Lun Lun, zookeepers hope that the elder panda is ready to mate. If all goes as planned, Lun Lun will become pregnant this spring and deliver Zoo Atlanta's second giant panda cub at the end of the summer.

NIU shootings stir sense of helplessness

By SHARON COHEN
AP NATIONAL WRITER

Bloody students fleeing in terror. Bodies carried out on stretchers. Candlelight vigils and makeshift shrines. Another campus, another deadly attack with a sickening senselessness that now borders on routine.

Despite a national push to secure schools after the Virginia Tech shootings, the rampage at Northern Illinois University this week proves a gut-wrenching reality: Unless colleges are willing to turn themselves into armed camps, they're helpless against these kinds of attacks.

As word of the shootings rippled throughout the country, students and authorities alike reacted with frustration and - tellingly—resignation.

"I don't think there's anything that could be done," said Brittany Dornack, 21, a sophomore at the University of Minnesota.

"People do what they feel like they need to do, and I don't think anyone is going to be able to stop them. People will just have to either learn to live in fear ... or they'll just have to not think about it."

ACROSS THE NATION

Adventurer Steve Fossett declared dead

CHICAGO (AP)—Millionaire adventurer Steve Fossett, who risked his life seeking to set records in high-tech balloons, gliders and jets, was declared dead Friday, 5 months after he vanished while flying in an ordinary small plane. The self-made business tycoon, who in 2002 became the first person to circle the world solo in a balloon, was last seen Sept. 3 after taking off in a single-engine plane from an airstrip near Yerington, Nev., heading toward Bishop, Calif. He was 63. His wife, Peggy V. Fossett, had him declared legally dead in Cook County Circuit Court as a step toward resolving the legal status of his estate. Judge Jeffrey Malak heard testimony Friday from Peggy Fossett, a family friend and a search-and-rescue expert before deciding there was sufficient evidence to declare him dead.

Ex-Ohio cop convicted of lover's death

CANTON, Ohio (AP)—The toddler's words to investigators were chilling: "Mommy's crying. Mommy broke the table. Mommy's in the rug," and, later, "Daddy's mad." The statements by the 2 1/2-year-old son of former police officer Bobby Cutts Jr. and his pregnant lover, Jessie Davis, were investigators' first clues that Cutts may have had something to do with her disappearance. A jury decided on Friday that he did. Cutts was convicted of killing Davis and her unborn fetus, a verdict that could land him a death sentence. Cutts sat with his hands on his lap and held his head erect without emotion as the verdicts were read.

Diplomat accused of using status for sex

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP)—A U.S. Foreign Service officer stationed in Brazil and Congo used his status to pressure female visa applicants for sex, according to federal charges unsealed Friday. Gons G. Nachman, 42, of Alexandria, is charged in U.S. District Court with misuse of his diplomatic passport, making false statements and possessing child pornography. Nachman was ordered jailed pending a detention hearing scheduled for Tuesday. According to the affidavit, Nachman made a habit of pressuring and pursuing sexual relationships with attractive female visa applicants while stationed in Rio de Janeiro.

Houston DA resigns over e-mail scandal

HOUSTON (AP)—A district attorney who's considered the state's most powerful prosecutor resigned Friday under the weight of a scandal involving the release of dozens of pornographic, racist and political e-mails on his office computer. Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal blamed the bizarre inbox contents, which included love notes to his secretary and campaign strategizing, on a combination of drugs he had been prescribed that affected his judgment, the Houston Chronicle reported. Rosenthal has endured a public outcry, including a street demonstration by hundreds of people, and calls from his own Republican Party officials for his own resignation since a federal judge mistakenly released the e-mails as part of a lawsuit against the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

Clinton says she can beat Obama, McCain

LYNDHURST, Ohio (AP)—Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton smothered Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain with kindness on Friday, then declared her rivals wrong on the issues and vowed to beat both in her quest for the presidency.

She said Obama, her Democratic foe, has run an "extraordinary campaign," and called McCain, the likely Republican nominee, "a man of great heroism."

Clinton

But she said McCain represents "more of the same" in Iraq, and she cast Obama as an obstacle to universal health care. She also unveiled a tough new ad against Obama, accusing him of dodging debates.

Her remarks came on a day when she characterized herself as the "candidate of, from and for the middle class of America" and endeavored to keep her Democratic coalition in Ohio intact against a hard-charging Obama.

Obama's brochures to voters, she said, "sound like they've been written by the health insurance industry and the Republicans, talking about how we can't possibly get to universal health care."

"My opponent has given up the fight before we've ever started," she told a gathering of Democrats at a party fundraiser outside Akron.

Obama not counting Clinton out

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Gathering strength, Sen. Barack Obama collected a key labor endorsement and coaxed away one of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's delegates on Friday, at the same time he criticized his rival for supporting legislation harmful to workers.

Obama

"Her supporting NAFTA didn't give jobs to the American people," Obama said of the free trade agreement implemented while Bill Clinton was in the White House. "Her supporting a bankruptcy bill made it harder for people to get out of debt that didn't help them with the bills that were stacking up on their desks."

Obama traveled across Wisconsin during the day, hoping to add the state to an impressive string of primary victories. At the same time, he hoped his second labor endorsement in as many days, would help him in Ohio, Texas and other primary states, and block Clinton's efforts to establish a campaign firewall.

The Illinois senator won the endorsement of the 1.9 million-member Service Employees International Union, one day after he collected the support of the United Food and Commercial Workers, a politically active union 69,000 members in Ohio and another 26,000 in Texas. The food workers also have 19,000 members in Wisconsin, which holds a primary Tuesday.

Asia

13 killed by Maoist rebels in India

BHUBANESWAR, India (AP)—Hundreds of Maoist militants stormed six police compounds in eastern India in carefully coordinated attacks Friday night, killing 12 police personnel and one civilian, a top police official said. Twelve more policemen were injured.

The attacks—on four police stations, one training academy and an armory—were scattered across the Nayagarh district, about 60 miles from Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa state, said Gopal Chandra Nanda, director general of the state police. The area is about 1,100 miles southeast of capital New Delhi.

Nanda said about 400 of the militants, known as Naxalites, were involved in the attacks, and that security forces were combing the area in search of them.

Nanda said the attackers seized about 1,000 stolen pistols. Press Trust of India news agency reported that the rebels fled with the arms in a bus that they had hijacked earlier, but Nanda said he was unable to confirm the report.

AP

ELEPHANT FESTIVAL

Elephants and mahouts arrive for ceremonies Saturday,l Feb. 16, 2008, at the second annual Elephant Festival in Paklay, Laos. Organizers of the three day festival are seeking increased awareness of the plight of the Asian elephant.

ASIAN BRIEFS

OFWs send home $1.4B in December

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Millions of Filipinos working overseas sent home US$1.4 billion in December—the most in a single month—pushing total remittances in 2007 to a record US$14.45 billion, officials said Friday. The funds accounted for 10 percent of annual gross domestic product, said Amando Tetangco, the central bank governor. He said the 2007 amount was 13 percent higher from the previous year because of "continued demand abroad for Filipino workers and enhanced remittance service provided by banks and nonbank remittance agents." About 8 million of the Philippines' population of 90 million work abroad, sending money that provides a backbone of the economy.

Convicted Khmer Rouge commander dies

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP)—Sam Bith, a former Khmer Rouge guerrilla commander serving a life sentence for masterminding the abduction and murder of three Western tourists in 1994, died Friday, a government spokesman said. He was 74 years old. Sam Bith was sentenced to life in prison in December 2002 after being found guilty of conspiring to kill Australian David Wilson, Briton Mark Slater and Frenchman Jean-Michel Braquet, all tourists, in 1994. Information Minister Khieu Kanharith announced that Sam Bith died at 9:30 p.m., without disclosing a cause of death. Sam Bith's wife, Khem Ri, said he had been "very sick" with diabetes and high blood pressure and had been hospitalized 10 days earlier.

Sri Lankan civil war spreads to Colombo

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—As a raging civil war killed thousands in the country's northeast, Sri Lankans in Colombo and other southern cities shopped, held picnics and cheered their children at soccer matches. Now a recent wave of bombings has brought the devastation of the civil war to the heart of the capital, and many are scared to leave their homes. The bombings blamed on Tamil Tiger rebels have ripped through passenger buses and a department store and killed half a high school baseball team in a packed train station. Normally overflowing buses travel half empty, parents whisk their children home after school and the government has appealed for tens of thousands of volunteers for a new civilian security force aimed at preventing more attacks.

4 Marines in Japan investigated for rape

TOKYO (AP)—U.S. military authorities held preliminary hearings Friday to determine whether four Marines who had been charged with raping a Japanese woman last year should be court-martialed. The four U.S. Marines - accused of an attack on a 19-year-old woman in October - were charged by the military in December, said Master Gunnery Sgt. John Cordero of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Iwakuni in southern Japan. The hearings, the military equivalent of civilian grand jury proceedings, began Thursday to decide whether the men would face court-martial, he said. Two of the Marines were also accused of stealing money from the woman.

Bhutto's party vows to remove Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—The party of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto said Friday it would try to remove President Pervez Musharraf if it wins next week's parliamentary elections.

Although Musharraf is not up for re-election, he could face impeachment if the opposition wins a commanding majority in the legislature.

"The ouster of Musharraf will put Pakistan back on the track of real democracy," Babar Awan, a member of the central executive council of the Pakistan People's Party, told The Associated Press.

Recent opinion surveys ahead of Monday's balloting show the party running well ahead of Musharraf supporters.

"We will win if the elections are not massively rigged," Awan said.

Awan's comments came a day after Musharraf warned his opponents not to immediately claim fraud and stage demonstrations after the vote.

Protesters call for Arroyo's ouster

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Thousands of protesters demanding the resignation of the Philippine president marched through Manila, undeterred by heavy security after officials revealed an alleged plot to assassinate her by al-Qaida-linked militants.

An estimated 10,000 people, including left-wing and Roman Catholic Church-backed groups, carried streamers reading "Gloria resign!" at Friday's rally in Makati, the capital's financial district. The rally was triggered by corruption allegations linking top officials and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's husband in a brewing kickback scandal.

"These are telling signs that the people are again roused and are ready to take political action," said Renato Reyes, secretary general of the left-wing Bayan, one of the organizers.

The protest came a day after the military said intelligence reports indicated communist rebels may infiltrate the rally.

World

Ownership dispute of Saddam's yacht

PARIS (AP)—For sale: A palatial pleasure yacht with swimming pools, opulent salons and, should the winds of war blow, a rocket launcher and mini-submarine.

The sale of the 269-foot Ocean Breeze, built for Saddam Hussein and docked on the French Riviera, could be thwarted, however, if Iraq can prove it belongs to someone in the late dictator's entourage - and now, therefore, to the government in Baghdad.

A court hearing will likely be held in March to determine the rightful owner.

The government in Baghdad suspects the yacht, which French authorities seized on Jan. 31, is still Iraqi. But the posh yacht brokerage firm Nigel Burgess says other owners, whom it will not name, have asked it to sell the vessel. The price has reportedly been set at $35 million.

Kenya rivals agree to review election

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Kenya's political rivals announced on Friday a 10-point plan to resolve their political crisis after weeks of negotiations but they remained deadlocked over power sharing.

The two sides did make progress on other issues, including an agreement for an independent review of the election at the center of their dispute. The Dec. 27 presidential vote unleashed weeks of ethnic violence that left more than 1,000 people dead and displaced hundreds of thousands.

"Let me assure you that there is real momentum," said former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who is mediating the political talks. "We are at the water's edge and the last difficult and frightening step, as difficult as it is, will be taken," he told reporters.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga and President Mwai Kibaki have been under international pressure to share power as a way to resolve their dispute over who won the election. Odinga says Kibaki stole the vote and should step down. Kibaki insists his position as president is not negotiable.

Egypt steps up HIV arrests

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) -- Egyptian police have stepped up arrests of persons suspected of having HIV, detaining four men this month in a crackdown that violates basic human rights, two international rights groups said Friday.

New York-based Human Rights Watch and London-based Amnesty International warned in a joint statement that the arrests could undermine HIV/AIDS prevention effort as people in Egypt become increasingly afraid to seek information on the subject.

WORLD BRIEFS

UN condemns peace obstacles in Eritrea

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The U.N. Security Council on Friday strongly condemned Eritrea's "lack of cooperation" with the U.N. peacekeepers monitoring the disputed border, demanding that it resume providing fuel and food and allow troops to move freely into Ethiopia. Council members said Friday they will consider "further appropriate steps"—which they didn't specify—for the safety and protection of the peackeepers. The council met in emergency session after Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Eritrea was obstructing the temporary relocation of the U.N. peacekeepers into Ethiopia. On Monday, Ban ordered the troops to relocate after Eritrea restricted their fuel supplies.

Anglican leader warns conservatives

TORONTO (AP)—The head of the Anglican Church of Canada has warned members who split with the church over its decision to bless same-sex unions that they will lose their church buildings and funds. "In our Anglican tradition, individuals who choose to leave the Church over contentious issues cannot take property and other assets with them," Archbishop Fred Hiltz said in a letter released Friday. The letter comes two days after St. John's Shaughnessy, a large parish church in Vancouver, voted to leave the Anglican Church of Canada and affiliate itself with a South American Anglican church, which has a more conservative stance on homosexuality.

Canada extradites Nazi to Italy

ROME (AP)—An 83-year-old former SS prison guard who was sentenced to life in jail in Italy for Nazi war crimes was extradited by Canada to Rome Friday, officials said. Canadian authorities handed Michael Seifert over to Italian police in Toronto and a special military flight departed late Friday afternoon, said Alain Charette, a spokesman for Canada's Department of Justice. When Seifert arrives Saturday, he will be transferred to a military prison near Naples to begin serving his sentence, said Bartolomeo Costantini, the military prosecutor who pursued the case. Seifert, known as the "Beast of Bolzano," was convicted in absentia in 2000 by a military tribunal in Verona on nine counts of murder, committed while he was an SS guard at a prison transit camp in Bolzano, northern Italy.

Somalia urges UN peacekeeping force

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Somalia's transitional government urged the Security Council on Friday to speed up its planning for the possible deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force to replace African Union troops in the war-wracked nation. Somalia's U.N. Ambassador Elmi Ahmed Duale endorsed a recent appeal by African heads of state to the council "to urgently take steps for the early deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations to further enhance peace in Somalia." Somalia has not had a functioning government since clan-based warlords toppled dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 and then turned on each other, sinking the poverty-stricken nation of 7 million into chaos. Its weak transitional government, backed by Ethiopian troops, is struggling to quash an Islamic insurgency that has killed thousands of civilians this year.

Vaclav Klaus re-elected Czech President

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP)—Czech President Vaclav Klaus won a second five-year term Friday when lawmakers chose him over a University of Michigan economics professor. Klaus, a dominant figure in Czech politics for nearly two decades, was supported by 141 legislators in the third round of voting by the Klaus Parliament, said Miloslav Vlcek, speaker for the parliament's lower chamber. He needed 140 votes to win. "I will be the President of all Czech citizens," Klaus said. Jan Svejnar, the University of Michigan professor, drew 111 votes. A third candidate, Jana Bobosikova, who had been nominated by the Communist Party, dropped out shortly before the voting began.

Focus

Ill. gunman's rampage baffles friends

By DEANNA BELLANDI
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DEKALB, Ill. (AP)—If there is such a thing as a profile of a mass murderer, Steven Kazmierczak didn't fit it: outstanding student, engaging, polite and industrious, with what looked like a bright future in the criminal justice field.

And yet on Thursday, the 27-year-old Kazmierczak, armed with three handguns and a brand-new pump-action shotgun he had carried onto campus in a guitar case, stepped from behind a screen on the stage of a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University and opened fire on a geology class. He killed five students before committing suicide.

University Police Chief Donald Grady said, without giving details, that Kazmierczak had become erratic in the past two weeks after he had stopped taking his medication. But that seemed to come as news to many of those who knew him, and the attack itself was positively baffling.

"We had no indications at all this would be the type of person that would engage in such activity," Grady said. He described the gunman as a good student during his time at NIU, and by all accounts a "fairly normal" person.

Exactly what set Kazmierczak off—and why he picked his former university and that particular lecture hall—remained a mystery. Police said they found no suicide note.

AP

This image taken from video Friday, Feb. 15, 2008 shows Steven Kazmierczak during a class at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Ill., in spring 2004.

Authorities were searching for a woman who police believe may have been Kazmierczak's girlfriend. According to a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the case is still under investigation, authorities were looking into whether Kazmierczak and the woman recently broke up.

No criminal record

Investigators learned that a week ago, on Feb. 9, Kazmierczak walked into a Champaign, gun store and picked up two guns—the Remington shotgun and a Glock 9mm handgun. He bought the two other handguns at the same shop—a Hi-Point .380 on Dec. 30 and a Sig Sauer on Aug. 6.

All four guns were bought legally from a federally licensed firearms dealer, said Thomas Ahern, a spokesman for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. At least one criminal background check was performed. Kazmierczak (pronounced kaz-MUR-chek) had no criminal record.

Kazmierczak had a State Police-issued FOID, or firearms owners identification card, which is required in Illinois to own a gun, authorities said. Such cards are rarely issued to those with recent mental health problems. The application asks: "In the past five years have you been a patient in any medical facility or part of any medical facility used primarily for the care or treatment of persons for mental illness?"

A Green Bay, Wis.-based Internet gun dealer who sold a weapon to the Virginia Tech shooter last year said he also sold handgun accessories to Kazmierczak.

"I'm still blown away by the coincidences," Eric Thompson said. "I'm shaking. I can't believe somebody would order from us again and do this."

Thompson's Web site, http://www.topglock.com, sold two empty 9 mm Glock magazines and a Glock holster to Kazmierczak on Feb. 4., though he had no idea whether they were used in Thursday's rampage. Thompson said his site did not sell Kazmierczak any bullets or guns.

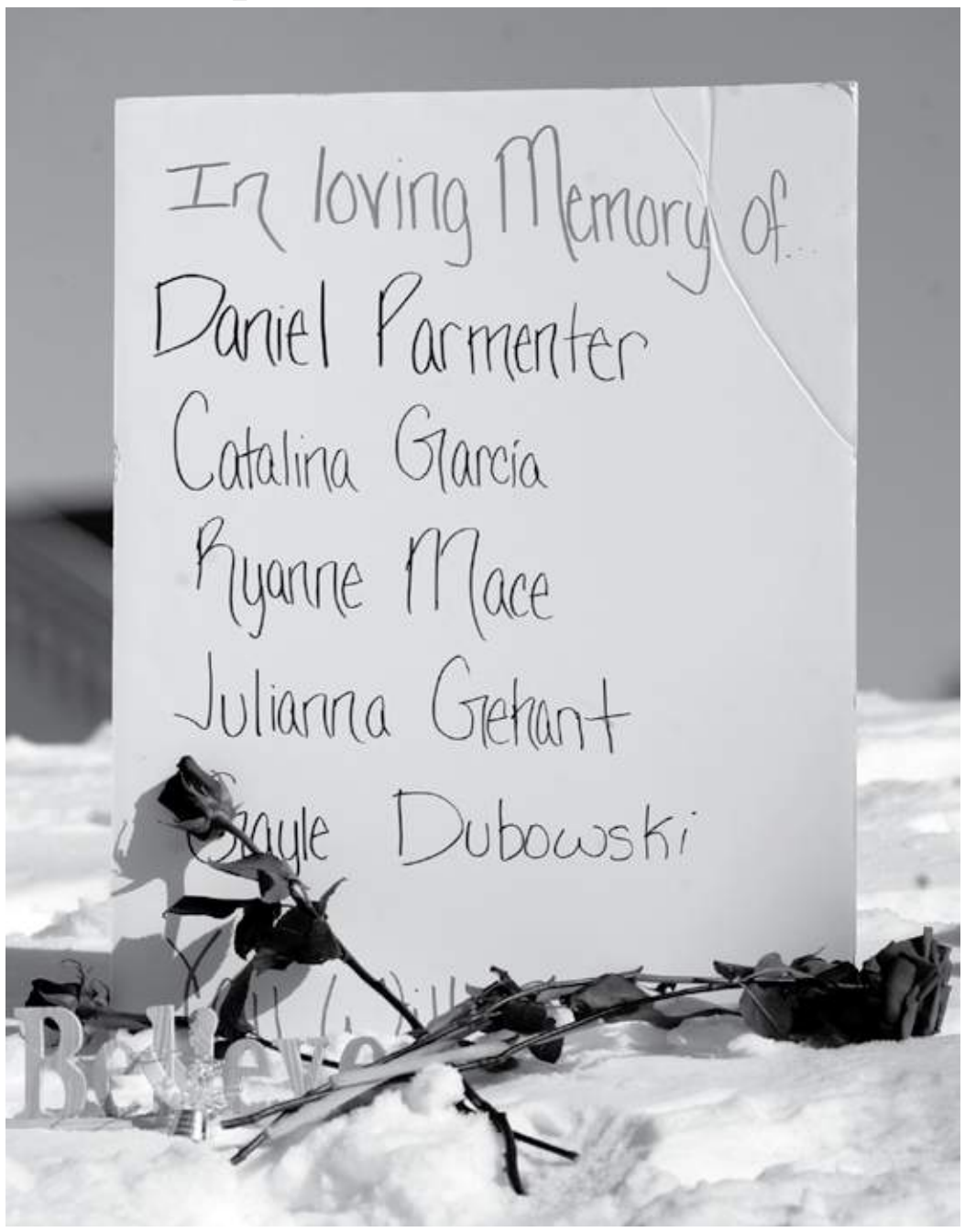
No misfit

Kazmierczak, who went by Steve, graduated from NIU in 2007 and was a graduate student in sociology there before leaving last year and moving on to the graduate school of social work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 130 miles away.

Unlike Virginia Tech gunman Seung-Hui Cho—a sullen misfit who could barely look anyone in the eye, much less carry on a conversation—Kazmierczak appeared to fit in just fine.

Chris Larrison, an assistant professor of social work, said Kazmierczak did data entry for Larrison's research grant on mental health clinics. Larrison was stunned by the shooting rampage, as was the gunman's faculty adviser, professor Jan Carter-Black.

"He was engaging, motivated, responsible. I saw nothing to suggest that there was anything troubling about his behavior," she said.



AP

A sign bearing the names of the five victims is posted on a hill on the campus of Northern Illinois University Friday, Feb. 15, 2008 in DeKalb, Ill.

Carter-Black said Kazmierczak wanted to focus on mental health issues and enrolled in August in a course she taught about human behavior and the social environment, but withdrew in September because he had gotten a job with the prison system.

He worked briefly as a full-time correction officer at the Rockville Correctional Facility, an adult medium-security prison in Rockville, Ind., about 80 miles from Champaign. His tenure there lasted only from Sept. 24 to Oct. 9, after which Indiana prisons spokesman Doug Garrison said "he just didn't show up one day."

Kazmierczak had left the job and resumed classes full-time at the Urbana-Champaign campus in January, Carter-Black said.

He also had a short-lived stint in the Army. He enlisted in the Army in September 2001, but was discharged in February 2002 for an "unspecified" reason, said Army spokesman Paul Boyce.

His University of Illinois student ID depicts a smiling, clean-cut Kazmierczak, unlike the scowling, menacing-looking images of Cho that surfaced after his rampage.

NIU President John Peters said Kazmierczak compiled "a very good academic record, no record of trouble" at the 25,000-student campus in DeKalb. He won at least two awards and served as an officer in two student groups dedicated to promoting understanding of the criminal justice system.

Exactly what sort of career he planned for himself was unclear. But he wrote papers on self-injury in prison and the role of religion in the creation of early U.S. prisons. The research paper on self-injury in prison said his interests also included political violence and peace and social justice.

No clues

Speaking Friday in Lakeland, Fla., Kazmierczak's distraught father did not immediately provide any clues to what led to the bloodshed.

"Please leave me alone. ... This is a very hard time for me," Robert Kazmierczak told reporters, throwing his arms up and weeping after emerging briefly from his house. He declined further comment about his son and went back inside his house, saying he was diabetic. A sign on the front door said: "Illini fans live here."

In Illinois, the gunman's sister, Susan Kazmierczak, posted a statement on the door of her Urbana home that said "We are both shocked and saddened. In addition to the loss of innocent lives, Steven was a member of our family. We are grieving his loss as well as the loss of life resulting from his actions."

Neighbors in the brick apartment building in Champaign where Kazmierczak last lived were shocked to hear he was the gunman.

"It's not possible," said Maurice Darling, 80, who lives in an adjacent second-floor apartment. "He seemed to be much too nice."

He said the tall, thin and bespectacled Kazmierczak shared the apartment with a woman and neither showed any sign of anger or aggression. "They were friendly, agreeable—just like any neighbor would be," she said.

Chelsea Thrash, a 25-year-old waitress who lives with her 3-year-old daughter in the apartment directly beneath Kazmierczak's, said he was always up late and there was frequently a lot of "trampling" noise coming through the hardwood floor. She went up and knocked on the door once recently at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. to request quiet and he said through the closed door, "Oh, I'm sorry—I dropped my weight."

"It's kind of creepy," she said. "I never thought someone in this tiny corner of southwest Champaign would ever dream of that, let alone carry it out, and have that above me and my daughter."

Six crosses

Kazmierczak grew up in the Chicago suburb of Elk Grove Village, not far from O'Hare Airport. His family lived most recently in a middle-class neighborhood of mostly one-story tract homes before moving away early in this decade. His mother died in Florida in 2006 at age 58.

He was a B student at Elk Grove High School, where school district spokeswoman Venetia Miles said he was active in band and took Japanese before graduating in 1998. He was also in the chess club.

At NIU, six white crosses were placed on a snow-covered hill around the center of campus, which was closed Friday. They included the names of four victims—Daniel Parmenter, Ryanne Mace, Julianna Gehant, Catalina Garcia. The two other crosses were blank, though officials have identified Kazmierczak's final victim as Gayle Dubowski.

Allyse Jerome, 19, a sophomore from Schaumburg, recalled how the gunman, dressed in black and a stocking cap, burst through a stage door in 200-seat Cole Hall just before class was about to let out. He squeezed off more than 50 shots as screaming students ran and crawled for cover.

"Honestly, at first everyone thought it was a joke," Jerome said. Everyone hit the floor, she said. Then she got up and ran, but tripped. She said she felt like "an open target."

"He could've decided to get me," Jerome said. "I thought for sure he was going to get me."

Associated Press writers Don Babwin, Caryn Rousseau, Ashley M. Heher, Dave Carpenter, Carla K. Johnson, Lindsey Tanner, David Mercer, Nguyen Huy Vu, Michael Tarm and Mike Robinson in Chicago, Anthony McCartney in Lakeland, Fla., and Matt Apuzzo and Lolita Baldor in Washington contributed to this report, along with the AP News Research Center in New York.

Life & Style

Smart small talk

Chitchat, idle banter, cocktail party conversation—small talk is ubiquitous. It's a staple of happy hours, sure, but it's also invoked in job interviews and at networking functions. It can also be maddeningly mundane.

Entry points to exit strategies

By JULIA FELDMEIER
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—*It's cold outside today, isn't it?*

Yes! It's frigid!

Makes me wistful for spring.

Me, too. I love warm weather.

Well, duh. Who doesn't? But even the worst weather has an upside: conversation fodder.

Chitchat, idle banter, cocktail party conversation—small talk is ubiquitous. It's a staple of happy hours, sure, but it's also invoked in job interviews and at networking functions. It's a necessary step toward talking a bigger game.

It can also be maddeningly mundane. So what makes light conversation good conversation? And how can those of us who are less silver-tongued learn not to sweat the small stuff?

"People are looking for the perfect thing to say," says Debra Fine, author of "The Fine Art of Small Talk" (Hyperion, 2005). "But most of us perfectionists never come up with the perfect icebreaker."

Hence, weather. It's a commonality, Fine says. So are Britney Spears (tragic, isn't it?), traffic (brutal, as always) and the fate of the local baseball team (will they ever hit the big time?). If the goal of small talk is to make the other person comfortable with you, agreeable topics are ideal.

"Focus on something that can put you on the same level as the person," says Jim Hewes, longtime bartender at the Willard InterContinental hotel's Round Robin Bar. "If the TV is on and the football game's on and you say, 'Go, Redskins,' and the guy at the bar says, 'Yeah, I love the Redskins,' then all of a sudden you've established common ground. Then he tells you that he lives in Cincinnati but used to live in Washington."

Whether or not you're a Redskins fan, conversation breeds conversation. Cliched openers turn up nuggets that beget richer topics.

"I haven't traveled much, but I know about things all over the world through the people I meet," Hewes says, "so I can carry on a conversation with someone about the weather in Tucson or the golf courses outside Sarasota Springs."

If knowledge is conversational sustenance, here's an idea: Read a newspaper. (See? You're already one step closer to being a small-talk sophisticate!)

"If you feel that you know enough things going on that you can fall back on, you're going to be more comfortable and more open about starting a conversation," says Susan RoAne, author of "What Do I Say Next?" (Grand Central, 1999).

The icebreaker is one thing; keeping the conversation going is another. Preparing a handful of talking points alleviates the problem of what to say next.

Imagine you're a job applicant. The interviewer comes to take you to her office. You shake hands and follow her down the hall, which is endless.

You finally get there, pleasantries about the weather exchanged. The interviewer calls her supervisor to sit in on the meeting. The supervisor says she'll be there in two minutes. Two minutes of filler conversation! Gulp.

It's up to you to assume the burden. If candidates are equally qualified, "they'll hire the one they feel comfortable with, not the one who's awkward," Fine says.

When in doubt, experts say, ask questions and listen. Attentiveness is flattery in the highest degree. Smart follow-up questions show you're interested and help the conversation flow.

Above all, experts say, don't panic when there are pauses. Such lulls are inevitable. and chances are the other person feels equally self-conscious.

At parties, of course, there is a delightful antidote to conversational awkwardness: alcohol. Booze has its limitations (slurry talk is not small talk), but it also presents a strategic opportunity. At cocktail parties and similar events, experts say, it's smart to stand near the bar or appetizer table. There's a constant flow of people and built-in commonality.

Those puff pastries are delicious, aren't they?

Indeed! I wonder what's in them?

(Uh, butter. Lots of butter.)

Just remember that cocktail parties are meant for movement, for interacting across the room.

"There should be a flow at a party like that," says Jeanne Martinet, author of "The Art of Mingling" (St. Martin's Griffin, 2006). "If everybody finds someone and stays talking to them, the party just stops."

Abandoning a conversation partner can be tricky, though.

Terry Bell, co-owner and hairstylist at Ilo Salon & Day Spa here, is good at knowing how to read people and when to exit the conversation.

"If a client sits in front of you and she opens up a magazine, you know that person does not want to talk," Bell says. "You might bring up some conversation just to keep it at a certain level, but you realize that the person doesn't want to talk for the whole 45 minutes."

If you're talking to someone whose eyes are roaming the room, they're ready to mingle. That's when you should excuse yourself to grab food or a drink, or say hello to the hostess, experts say.

"Giving someone just a little explanation of why you have to exit is thoughtful," RoAne says. It's also good etiquette to say that you enjoyed speaking with the person and, when possible, to mention something you discussed. Be sure to walk toward another person or the food table, she says: "If you just turn your back and stay in the same physical space, that's insulting."

What if you're ready to move on, but the other person isn't catching your signals? Fine suggests waving a white flag of sorts: acknowledging that although there's someone else you'd like to see, you want to hear the person's story before you go.

"You're saying, 'OK, I want to get over there, but I'm giving you two minutes to wrap this up,' " Fine says. "People with good manners recognize that. People without manners keep going and going—then it's OK for me to interrupt you at that point and take off."

Extending your hand toward someone is one obvious but polite clue that the conversation has ended. The bar and hors d'oeuvres table offer other outlets: You can walk to get refills together and, while grabbing a drink or piece of bruschetta, fold yourself into a new conversation. You can also introduce your conversation partner to someone new, help facilitate the chitchat for a minute and then excuse yourself.

It isn't always easy, comfortable or interesting, but aficionados believe small talk can provide big gains. The point of the trite topics is to unearth topics on which to connect, and which could play out in business, romance or your social life.

So RoAne is adamant that introductions always include a person's first and last names. "You never know who's going to be somebody," she says. "But if you only give one name, the follow-up isn't so easy."

It's a delicate balance. Small talk with an opportunistic motive can quickly devolve from light conversation to overt exploitation. Keep it real, and look for genuine things in common.

"We're all very similar; we have the same feelings, same fears. Everybody puts their pants on one leg at a time," says Hewes, whose patrons routinely include high-powered executives and lobbyists.

And everyone talks about the weather. Lovely, isn't it?

Got a burning question? Zip it.

By JULIA FELDMEIER
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Open mouth, insert foot. We've all done it—unleashed conversational gaffes that have given new weight to the term "pregnant pause." Here are some tips from experts on questions (ital) not (end ital) to bring up:

■ "So, where do you work?" Yawn. "There are so many other parts to people," says Garlin Nicholas, a veteran hairstylist at Celadon Spa here. Let the topic emerge organically; otherwise, it may seem as though you're asking about people's jobs as a way of sizing them up.

■ "Are you single?" There are three possibilities here: (A) It's the start of a come-on, which is awkward. (B) It's the prelude to a matchmaking attempt. Again, awkward. Or (C) you've forgotten how much you hated that question when you were single.

■ "You're a Democrat, right?" Contrary to conventional wisdom, you can talk about politics. "The mistake most of us make with politics or religion is that we come across as know-it-alls," Fine says. It's OK to state your thoughts, but be sure to listen to others' opinions in return.

JUMP RIGHT IN...

By JULIA FELDMEIER
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—In today's hyper-tech world, we're increasingly conditioned to avoid small talk. Imagine your friend is late to meet you at a bar. Do you order a drink and look around? Hardly. Instead, you start furiously texting and rereading old messages. If you look busy, you're not forced to talk to the person next to you.

"People are getting more and more isolated," says Jeanne Martinet, author of "The Art of Mingling." "People's mingling muscles are atrophying even more."

That's right: mingling muscles. But how do you go about inserting yourself into conversation? Martinet offers a few tips.

EAT AND GREET

The easiest way to acquaint yourself with fellow partygoers. If it's a party with passed-around hors d'oeuvres, watch the server. People typically step out of their conversation circles when the server comes by with pigs in blankets, offering you a good opportunity to insert yourself into the discussion. But there's one caveat, Martinet says: "Whatever you do, don't block the food."

THE HONEST APPROACH

It sounds bold and brazen, but Martinet says it's effective. "You say, 'Hi, I don't know a single soul here,' and people want to help you." We've all been in this situation, and we've been grateful to those who helped us.

THE FADE-IN

You slowly move up to a group, listening to what's being said. Then you put in your two cents and—voila!—you're a part of the conversation. Martinet calls it the fade-in; others call it eavesdropping. Either way, at parties, anything is fair game. "The main thing is to get into the group," Martinet says, "have people turning to you, speaking to you."

FLATTERY

Everybody responds to praise, Martinet says. It's a quick and kind way to get someone's attention. But be careful what you comment on, she advises: "Always accessories, always above the waist. It's too personal to talk about someone's clothing. If people don't want to talk to you, they will make it clear very quickly, and then they will escape."

THREE WISE GUYS

Flossing at work, guy friends, photo-ID credit cards

By JOE HEIM, JUSTIN RUDE and DAN ZAK

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Dear Wise Guys:

I work in a cubicle environment, where one is aware of much that goes on in nearby cubicles. One of my colleagues flosses his teeth at least once a day in his cubicle. Oddly, other male colleagues have seen him bringing his toothbrush and toothpaste into the bathroom. I am not sure why he chooses to undertake one dental hygiene task in the bathroom and another within clear sight and hearing range of a number of colleagues. Needless to say, we are all disturbed and disgusted with this daily habit and reluctant to use common office documents that have been in his possession. Is this appropriate shared-office-space behavior? If not, any suggestions?—Trina

Dan: Is he eating corn on the cob every day? Do you know if he brushes in the bathroom? If he does, and confines his flossing to his cubicle, that's weird. But if he only flosses ... Listen, I take issue not with the act but with the conspicuousness. If you're going to floss in your cubicle—as I myself have done, I'll admit—do so discreetly. This goes for farting, too.

Joe: Is that what you consider discreet, Dan? The rest of us here don't think so. As for your question, Trina, if you post this column in the office break room, he may get the message. Or he'll fold it up and use it to pick his teeth.

■ ■ ■

Dear Wise Guys:

My husband complains that he has no friends, and he's right. Most of his friends have moved away, fallen off the face of the Earth or coupled off. Where can a 30-year-old guy go in the D.C. area to meet up with other guys (single or married) to do "guy" things, such as work out, boat, camp, watch sports, drink, scratch, etc.?—Alexandria

Justin: If your husband has even marginal athletic experience, a great way to make friends is by joining a recreational league. The area is full of rec centers that host organized leagues in almost every sport. Finding a team is often as easy as e-mailing the league commissioner. From then on, making friends is usually as easy as contributing the postgame beers once or twice.

Joe: Or you could just have him e-mail Dan, whose crude cubicle habits have cost him all of his friendships.

■ ■ ■

Hi there, oh wise and modest guys:

A few years ago, I had a credit card that would never be stolen. It had my photo on it. After a few years, the bank that issued it was swallowed by another, which (while promising to introduce products I would love) canceled the product I did love. Is there any bank that still issues this type of credit card? Identity theft is more of a problem than ever. Why is this solution so hard to find?—Susan

Joe: Well, Susan (if that really is your name and you aren't someone pretending to be Susan), you must have really liked the photo on your credit card. We checked with John Hall, a spokesman for the American Bankers Association, who says it's up to each issuer whether to provide a photo credit card. Hall recommends shopping around to find one that does.

The bigger question, though, is whether your photo on a credit card is effective. Linda Foley, the founder of the Identity Theft Resource Center in San Diego, says it is only a partial deterrent.

"Unfortunately, about 50 percent of the time, no one even looks at my credit card," she says. "You could sign it 'Mickey Mouse,' and they don't look at the signature." Foley adds that, as consumers, we "need to be more forceful in requiring people to check information and IDs."

The Washington Post offers Three Wise Guys, advice on life and other stuff from the male perspective, perpetrated by Post staffers, from left, Justin Rude, Joe Heim and Dan Zak. It may not be professional advice, but their responses to reader questions serve up a deft handling of any conceivable topic.

With strike over, Oscars will glitter

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—The end of the Hollywood writers strike means the Oscar show will be the usual star-studded, fashion-filled extravaganza, organizers promised.

"The strike, the bad news, is past us," Sid Ganis, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, said Thursday.

The 80th annual awards show will be held Feb. 24 at the Kodak Theatre and will feature a host of A-list stars. Forest Whitaker, Helen Mirren, Jennifer Hudson, Miley Cyrus, George Clooney and Nicole Kidman will be among the presenters. Others include Denzel Washington, Martin Scorsese, Cate Blanchett, Cameron Diaz, Harrison Ford and Tom Hanks.

Had the three-month writers strike not ended Tuesday, the Academy still would have put on a "B" show - one without the glitter of the nominated actors, virtually all of whom said they would not cross a picket line.

"The 'B Show' was going to have the musical numbers, and there was going to be a lot of energy to that," telecast producer Gil Cates told AP Television. "But it was going to rely mostly on film clips, mostly on historical clips, because it is the 80th year of the Oscars."

The "A" show will feature performances of the year's five nominated songs. "Enchanted" star Amy Adams will sing "Happy Working Song," one of the film's three nominated tunes.

Kristin Chenoweth and Marlon Saunders will perform "That's How You Know" and Jon McLaughlin will sing "So Close," also from "Enchanted."

The stars of "Once," Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova, will perform their song "Falling Slowly." Jamia Simone Nash, along with the IMPACT repertory Theatre of Harlem, will sing "Raise It Up" from "August Rush."

Jon Stewart was previously announced as the show's host.

Ganis said some elements of the "B" show also were likely to work their way into the telecast.

Working on both "A" and "B" scenarios has created a time crunch.

"We're rushing," Ganis said.

"Instead of working 12-hour days, we'll be working 13-, 14-hour days," Ganis said. "That's OK for the next 10 days."

Beyonce's dad weighs in on 'queen' flap

NEWYORK(AP)—Beyonce's father says Aretha Franklin's criticism of his daughter for referring to Tina Turner as "the Queen" at the Grammys is "ridiculous."

On Tuesday, the Queen of Soul let everyone know her royal feathers were ruffled when Beyonce called Turner "The Queen" before their joint performance Sunday at the Grammys. Franklin, who also performed at the ceremony, was sitting in the audience: Beyonce did reference her along with other top female singers before introducing Turner.

"I am not sure of whose toes I may have stepped on or whose ego I may have bruised between the Grammy writers and Beyonce," Franklin said in a statement issued by her publicist. "However, I dismissed it as a cheap shot for controversy."

However, in an interview with CelebTV.com posted Wednesday, Matthew Knowles, Beyonce's father and manager, said: "I am not taking something this ridiculous to Beyonce. Beyonce referred to Tina Turner as a 'queen.' Not queen of gospel, queen of soul, queen of blues, Queen of England. I consider my wife a queen and sometimes call her that. Does Aretha have a problem with that?"

AP

Beyonce arrives at the 50th Annual Grammy Awards in this Feb. 10, 2008, file photo in Los Angeles.

Beyonce's representative did not respond to a request from The Associated Press seeking comment.

An e-mail request for comment from Franklin's representative was not immediately returned. However, in her statement on Tuesday, Franklin made clear she wasn't holding a grudge toward Beyonce, ending her statement by giving the Grammys thanks and "love to Beyonce anyway."

Howard the Duck creater Gerber dies

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Steve Gerber, the comic book writer and creator whose signature character was the alienated, cigar-chomping Howard the Duck, has died. He was 60. Gerber, who also co-created Marvel's "Omega the Unknown" and created the 1980s animated series "Thundarr the Barbarian," suffered from pulmonary fibrosis.

He died Sunday in a Las Vegas hospital from complications related to the disease, said Mary Skrenes, a friend and writing partner on "Omega" and other comics.

The "Howard the Duck" series became a fast hit after its January 1976 debut on Marvel and remains a cult favorite. Its lead, a disgruntled duck from another universe with a bombshell sidekick named Beverly "Thunder-Thighs" Switzler, was hailed as both smart and subversive.

The adjectives could be applied to Gerber, Skrenes said.

"Howard was his voice. Steve was able to do social commentary and sort of sneak it up on you," she said. "Sometimes it was obvious what the message was there, and other times is was really subtle because it took place in a mystical realm or outer space."

Or in Cleveland, where Howard was a lone talking duck "trapped in a world he never made!" according to the comic's tagline.

Gerber split with Marvel in 1978 amid a dispute over the rights to the character. He sued the company and settled out of court.

Skrenes said Gerber was not closely involved in George Lucas' 1986 "Howard the Duck" film, which fared poorly at the box office.

Gerber also worked in television as a story editor on "G.I. Joe" and "Dungeon & Dragons."

More recently, Gerber and Skrenes created "Hard Time" for DC Comics, the story of a 15-year-old boy convicted in a Columbine-like school shooting who discovers he has special powers. Gerber was working on a revival of the DC Comics' Dr. Fate series at the time of his death.

"He was the kind of guy people would give an old, moribund idea to and he would come up with a fresh idea for it," said Mark Evanier, a friend.

Gerber was born Sept. 20, 1947, in St. Louis and received a bachelor's degree from St. Louis University, before joining Marvel as an assistant editor in 1972. He is survived by his mother, Bernice; his daughter, Samantha Voll; and three siblings.

Private services are pending.

Guilty plea in actress' NYC slaying

NEW YORK (AP)—A construction worker who admitted strangling actress Adrienne Shelly while robbing her apartment and then hanging her body to make it look like a suicide pleaded guilty Thursday to manslaughter.

Diego Pillco, 20, admitted he killed Adrienne Shelly, 40, in her Manhattan flat after going through her purse. He was promised a sentence on March 6 of 25 years in prison.

State Supreme Court Justice Carol Berkman said Pillco, who is from Ecuador, South America, and is in the United States illegally, is subject to immediate deportation upon release from prison.

Shelly, born Adrienne Levine, appeared in the 2005 movie "Factotum" with Matt Dillon. She made her directorial debut with "Sudden Manhattan" in 1996, and she wrote, directed and co-starred in "Waitress," which also featured Keri Russell.

With Shelly's mother, brothers, other relatives and friends present, Pillco explained to the court how he killed her on Nov. 1, 2006. His story differed considerably from the account he initially gave police.

The defendant first said he was renovating a third-floor apartment in Greenwich Village when Shelly came down and complained that he was making too much noise. Shelly used the apartment in that building as an office.

Pillco initially said she called him names, they fought and he killed her accidentally. He said he then hanged her with a bed sheet to make her death look like suicide.

On Thursday, Pillco admitted to the court that he was in fact robbing her when he killed her. He said he had eaten his lunch in the basement and was walking back up the stairs to resume working when he saw Shelly going up to her flat.

Unusual legal filing in Spears case

LOS ANGELES (AP)—An attorney who claims to represent Britney Spears has filed papers to move her conservatorship case from the Los Angeles County Superior Court to federal court, but legal experts question whether his legal strategy is viable and whether he can represent the troubled pop star at all.

In a document filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, attorney Jon Eardley writes that Spears has not "received the benefit of a single hearing before the court," and "is being confined by the conservator to the private prison of her own home," in violation of her civil rights.

After more than a year of bizarre behavior and two stints in a psychiatric hospital this year, Spears was placed under a conservatorship by a Superior Court commissioner at the beginning of February. Conservatorships are established when a court determines someone cannot take care of themselves or their affairs.

In his federal court filing, Eardley asks "whether an adult child may be subjected by her parents to their complete and total control" and claims her conservators - her father, James Spears, and attorney Andrew Wallet - control what prescription medications she takes.

Calls for comment to Eardley's phone numbers in Washington, D.C., Jericho, N.Y., and Whittier, Calif. were not returned on Thursday or Friday.

Commissioner Reva Goetz has found that under the terms of the conservatorship, Britney Spears lacks the capacity to hire her own lawyer without the approval of her conservators.

Spears

Another attorney, Adam Streisand, unsuccessfully sought to represent the singer during a probate hearing Feb. 4 when he argued that she told him by phone that she wanted her father removed as conservator.

Legal experts were doubtful that Eardley's bid to remove the case to federal court would succeed.

"Anyone who's under a conservatorship can argue that they've lost their civil rights," said Peter Tiersma, a law professor who teaches trusts and wills at Loyola Law School. "That's what a conservatorship does, it takes away some of your rights."

If the federal court were to take jurisdiction of the Spears case, said Tiersma, "that would mean that anyone under a conservatorship could do this, and that's a loophole you could drive a truck through."

Family law attorney Alexandra Leichter said the existing orders in the case, including Goetz's decision that the pop star cannot retain counsel, will stand until a district court rules on whether it will take the case, which she said is highly unlikely.

"This is strictly a state matter. The fed court will not take jurisdiction of this case. That is so far-fetched and off the wall," said Leichter. "They'll laugh them out of court."

Superior Court spokesman Allan Parachini would not comment on the federal court filing.

"All current orders in this matter remain in full force and effect," he said.

The filing was delivered to the Superior Court by Michael Sands, a publicist who says he represents Britney Spears' sometime manager and friend, Sam Lutfi. Until recently, Sands worked for an attorney who represents the singer's ex-husband Kevin Federline in a custody dispute over their two young sons.

Rocker tells Huckabee to lay off song

CONCORD, N.H. (AP)—The chief songwriter and founder of the band Boston has more than a feeling that he's being ripped off by Mike Huckabee. In a letter to the Republican presidential hopeful, Tom Scholz complains that Huckabee is using his 1970s smash hit song "More Than a Feeling" without his permission.

A former member of the band, Barry Goudreau, has appeared with Huckabee at campaign events, and they have played the song with Huckabee's band, Capitol Offense.

Scholz, who said Goudreau left the band more than 25 years ago after a three-year stint, objects to the implication that the band and one of its members has endorsed Huckabee's candidacy.

"Boston has never endorsed a political candidate, and with all due respect, would not start by endorsing a candidate who is the polar opposite of most everything Boston stands for," wrote Scholz, adding that he is supporting Democratic Sen. Barack Obama. "By using my song, and my band's name Boston, you have taken something of mine and used it to promote ideas to which I am opposed. In other words, I think I've been ripped off, dude!"

Fred Bramante, who was chairman of Huckabee's New Hampshire campaign, called the allegations ridiculous. He said he attended dozens of Huckabee rallies in New Hampshire and other states and never heard Huckabee play "More Than a Feeling," other than when Goudreau campaigned with him in Iowa in October.

"Governor Huckabee plays 'Sweet Home Alabama.' Does that mean Lynyrd Skynyrd is endorsing him? He plays 'Louie Louie.' Does that mean The Kingsmen are endorsing him? To me, it's ridiculous," he said. "Never once has he said, 'The band Boston endorses me.'

Scholz, in a telephone interview Friday, said he understands "More Than a Feeling" has been a centerpiece at some rallies, and said Goudreau is identified with the band in an endorsement video.

"Whenever a campaign publicly exploits a well-known song, there is some inference of support" by the band or artist, he added.

He recommends that Huckabee "stick to music recorded by far-right Republicans."

Tensions between Scholz and some of the early band members date from the early 1980s, when CBS Inc. sued the band over delays in recording new albums. The company's Epic Records label recorded the band's first two releases: "Boston," in 1976, and "Don't Look Back," in 1978.

Scholz—who wrote, engineered, and laid down nearly all the instrumental tracks on the first album - countersued for the rights to the band's name and music. Three members of the original band, including Goudreau, testified for the record company, which lost.

In his letter, Scholz referred to Huckabee as the "straight talk candidate," but that label more often is applied to Sen. John McCain, who has had his own troubles when it comes to his musical playlist. Last week, McCain's campaign agreed to stop playing John Mellencamp's songs "Our Country" and "Pink Houses" at his rallies after the liberal rocker complained.

Mellencamp had supported Democrat John Edwards, who recently dropped out of the race.

Other candidates have had better luck selecting songs. Celine Dion said she was "thrilled" that Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton used her song, "You and I" as her official campaign anthem. Obama frequently blares U2's "City of Blinding Lights" at his events.

IN CELEBRATION OF HIS NEW LIFE

JOAQUIN JONES CASTRO

[CNMI Retired Police Major]

fondly known as "Kindu" and "JJ Castro",
husband of Elisa Ulloa Maratita-Castro,

was called to his eternal rest on Wednesday, February 13, 2008
(Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA, time)

Mass of intention is offered daily at 6:00 a.m. at
Kristo Rai Church in Garapan. Holy Rosary is prayed at
7:30 p.m. at the family's residence in Dandan behind
Joeten Dandan Supermarket.

Interment services will be announced at a later date.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase for your thoughts and prayers.

Lis, Children and Family

Heather Mills, right, arrives with two men at the High Court in London, Friday, Feb. 15, 2008. AP

McCartney divorce battle goes on

LONDON (AP)—The divorce hearing between Paul McCartney and Heather Mills looks set to stretch into a second week, after a judge allotted extra time for the couple's court case. The hearing had been scheduled to end Friday, but officials at London's Royal Courts of Justice said the case before Justice Hugh Bennett would continue Monday.

Mills and McCartney separated in 2006 after four years of marriage and have since traded blows in the media while trying, and failing, to agree on divorce terms.

The hearing was called to decide on Mills' share of the former Beatle's fortune, estimated at as much as $1.6 billion. Media reports suggest that McCartney has offered his wife about $50 million and that she is seeking at least double that amount.

The couple have squared off every day this week, but few details have emerged. Unlike most British court cases, divorce proceedings are heard in private, and the courtroom is closed to journalists and the public.

Mills, 40, and McCartney, 65, have made no comment to the reporters and photographers who have gathered outside court each day.

McCartney has hired lawyer Fiona Shackleton, who represented Prince Charles in his 1996 divorce from Princess Diana. Mills, who fired her legal team late last year, is representing herself.

After the hearing ends, Bennett is expected to take several weeks to consider his settlement. The terms will not become public unless it is challenged in the Court of Appeal, or either of the parties chooses to reveal details.

Mills is a former model whose left leg was amputated below the knee after a motorcycle accident in 1993. She became active in campaigning against land mines and in favor of animal welfare.

The couple married in June 2002 - four years after the death of McCartney's first wife, Linda —and their daughter Beatrice was born in October the following year. They announced their separation in 2006, and McCartney filed for divorce alleging "unreasonable behavior" by his wife.

Walken receives Hasty Pudding award

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP)—Christopher Walken sang a song from "Hairspray" and spoofed a "Saturday Night Live" skit Friday night to earn Harvard's Hasty Pudding Man of the Year award.

At a roast before the presentation, Walken, who serenaded John Travolta last year in the latest film version of "Hairspray," sang to a Harvard student dressed in drag.

Another cast member of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals at Harvard University, the nation's oldest undergraduate drama troupe, came on stage banging a cow bell, evoking the "SNL" skit in which Walken played a music producer who called for "more cow bell."

Walken, who joked afterward that he'd "have prepared or had a couple of drinks" if he had known what was in store, donned a copper-colored bra and brown wig. He couldn't get into a pair of blue pumps that were supposed to be part of the outfit, doing a dance in his street shoes instead.

AP

Actor Christopher Walken holds his "Pudding Pot" award while being honored as the Hasty Pudding Man of the Year at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., Friday Feb. 15, 2008. Dressed in drag are actors Daniel Svirsky, left, and Michael Drake, right.

The Hasty Pudding roasters also had Walken read the recipe for "hasty pudding," and asked him to show off his "psychic powers," a play on his role in 1983's "The Dead Zone."

"I hope nobody's watching," Walken said. "I acted on this stage in a play about 20 years ago."

In a more serious vein, he said he was "amazed and thrilled" by the honor.

The 64-year-old actor won a best supporting actor Oscar as a troubled Vietnam veteran in 1978's "The Deer Hunter." He was nominated again for 2002's "Catch Me If You Can."

Last year, he was featured in the film "Balls of Fury."

Talisa Friedman, press manager for the Hasty Pudding drama troupe, said Walken exemplifies the Hasty Pudding spirit and the value it puts on fun.

Charlize Theron also won a Hasty Pudding award this year.

Trump plans Puerto Rico golf complex

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—Real estate mogul Donald Trump is extending his reach to Puerto Rico, announcing a partnership Friday to build a $600 million golf complex on the island's northern coast.

The Trump International Golf Club Puerto Rico, to be developed with local construction company Empresas Diaz Inc., will include 500 residences on a 1,000-acre site between the Atlantic coast and the U.S. territory's tropical rain forest.

"We're building something that's going to be known all over the world," Trump said at a news conference before clinking champagne glasses with Gov. Anibal Acevedo Vila.

The first 56 villas, to be sold at prices starting at $1.4 million, include access to a private jet, a yacht and limousine service.

Developers plan to improve a golf course, previously known as the Coco Beach Golf & Country Club, and open a new clubhouse before March 17, when the 36-hole course hosts the Puerto Rico Open, a PGA Tour event.

The U.S. territory is seeking to boost its economy with more hotels and golf-related tourism, Acevedo said.

Trump told reporters he would consider additional investments in the future, including a possible return of the Miss Universe pageant that he co-owns with owned by General Electric Co.'s NBC.

Eisner donates $1.75M to honor professor

GRANVILLE, Ohio (AP)—Former Walt Disney Co. CEO Michael Eisner has donated $1.75 million to Denison University to honor one of his favorite professors, the school said Friday.

Eisner is a 1964 graduate of the liberal arts university in central Ohio. He made the endowment gift from The Eisner Foundation to establish the Dominick Consolo Endowed Professorship.

Consolo, an emeritus professor of English, was an active faculty member at Denison from 1958 until his retirement in 1992. Eisner has said that he was one of the inspirations for Robin Williams' character in the movie "Dead Poets Society," according to the university.

In 2003, Cal State Northridge named its education college after Eisner after his foundation gave $7 million to the school.

Eisner stepped down as Disney's chief executive in October 2005. He now works as a venture capitalist and as host of a CNBC talk show, "Conversations with Michael Eisner."

Delayed Streep film gets release date

HONG KONG (AP) —A Meryl Streep movie about a student who turns violent on a U.S. campus that was delayed following the Virginia Tech shootings will be released this spring, its distrubutor said Friday, just hours after another campus rampage that left five dead.

"Dark Matter," which also stars Liu Ye, one of China's rising stars, will debut in New York City on April 11 and be released in other American cities after that, Gary Rubin, president of First Independent Pictures, told The Associated Press in a phone interview Friday.

Rubin said the film, directed by Chinese-born director Chen Shizheng, had been scheduled for release last year but its producers and investors shelved the movie "out of respect for the Virginia Tech incident."

The release date comes a year after Korean-American student Cho Seung-hui killed 32 people and himself at the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Virginia, on April 16.

The announcement also comes after another U.S. campus shooting incident. On Thursday, a former student opened fire in a science class at Northern Illinois University, killing five students and wounding 16 before committing suicide.

AP

Meryl Streep arrives at the premiere of "Lions for Lambs" in Los Angeles in this November 1, 2007, photo.

Like the student in the Virginia Tech shooting, the disgruntled student in "Dark Matter" is Asian. In the film, inspired by true events, Liu plays a Chinese science graduate student who becomes violent after dealing with academic politics at a U.S. university.

Streep plays a wealthy patron of the university who befriends the student.

Rubin says he believes it's now the right time to release "Dark Matter."

"Obviously that (Virginia Tech) was a long time ago. We're not even focusing on that aspect of it at this point. It's a good movie and we feel it should get out there," he said.

Rubin said "Dark Matter" initially will target art-house markets in the U.S., but it's unclear if Streep and Liu will promote it. Rubin said the movie's marketing plan is still being decided.

The movie won the Alfred P. Sloan Prize for movies about science at the Sundance Film Festival last year.

Young friend of the family has become a little too friendly

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I'm having a problem with the older sister of my daughter's best friend. I'll refer to the girl as "Cassie." Cassie is 16 or 17, and she's attracted to my significant other of 19 years, "Adam," who is 42.

Adam and I are friendly with Cassie's parents. We socialize with them at school sporting events, as well as at-home get-togethers.

Over the past year, Cassie has started coming up to me and asking, "Where's Adam?" Then she will run and jump into his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist as she says "Hi." Adam said she sometimes smacks him on the behind. She also stands directly in front of him and says things like, "Doesn't my butt look good?"

We have discussed this as a family, and have indicated to our daughter that we would never tolerate the same actions on her part. She agrees and expresses disgust. I have also pointed out to Adam that this would not sit well with him if, in two years, his daughter began exhibiting the same behavior with a friend's father—or anyone else, for that matter.

How do we handle this without our friends becoming insulted? We suspect they think Cassie's behavior is "cute."

DISGUSTED IN DECATUR, ILL.

DEAR DISGUSTED: Cassie's behavior is extremely inappropriate. You have described a young woman who has never learned boundaries. Could she have emotional problems?

If it happens again, Adam should tell her in plain English that she's too big and too heavy, and he doesn't like it. If she touches him inappropriately, he should tell her to stop because it is "disrespectful." As the adult, it's up to him to apply the brakes.

As to her questions about her posterior, it boggles my mind that Adam would actually respond to them, so he should continue to ignore them. It may also be necessary to stop socializing with the parents.

P.S. One way to approach the parents might be for Adam to call Cassie's father and ask what kind of insurance they have, in case his back goes out the next time their daughter jumps on him!

▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

DEAR ABBY: My husband's stepmother loves to buy me clothes, but the clothes are—shall I say tactfully—not my taste. She also buys my husband and me underwear, which makes me extremely uncomfortable.

Usually I gracefully accept her gifts, then donate them to charity. I feel guilty that she spends time shopping and buying items that she thinks I would like. But honestly, I find them unattractive and inappropriate. Recently, she insulted me by buying me clothes that were several sizes too large. I'm sure she selected them out of ignorance, not malice, but the implication that she thinks I'm much larger than I am makes me angry.

Should I say something to her about the incorrect sizes? And how can I steer her away from buying these unsuitable gifts?

ILL-FITTING IN HIGHLAND VILLAGE, TEXAS

DEAR ILL-FITTING: Has it occurred to you that your well-meaning but misguided mother-in-law may love you like the daughter she always wanted, and that's why she's buying you clothes? Or, she may have too much time on her hands and spends her time shopping.

To refuse her gifts would be rude, but a better solution might be to suggest that you go shopping together. That way, at least you'd have something you might enjoy.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $12 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)

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All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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1 MAINTENANCE (SUN 1561)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; provide own food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Josemary T. Tumaquip dba TC BBQ Stand/TC Services Ent., @287-3170/789-7605.

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1 PAINTER (SUN 1567)
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1 MAINTENANCE/BUILDING REPAIRER (SUN 1568)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Free housing; free (1 or 2 duty meal); medical & workers compensation provided. Repatriation by employer. Contact: MISA Enterprises, Inc. @234-6900.

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1 ELECTRICIAN (SUN 1569)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Free housing; self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Tropical Gardens Inc. dba Saipan Zoo @322-5711.

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1 CARPENTER (SUN 1570)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provide housing; self provide food; medical & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Pacific International Marianas Inc. dba Midway Motors @234-7524.

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2 TOUR COUNSELOR (SUN 1573)
Salary:$700.00/monthly. Benefits: Employer provided housing; self provided food; transportation free on designated pick-up point; medical and workers compensation employer provided. Korean speaking, reading and writes is a must. Contact: Rainbow Corporation dba Lim's Office/E&F Tours @234-6564.

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1 MAINT. REPAIRER, BUILDING (SUN 1574)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; employee provided food; medical & workers compensation employers provided. Contact: Glicerio D. Arago dba NCI Contractor @287-0487/233-2652.

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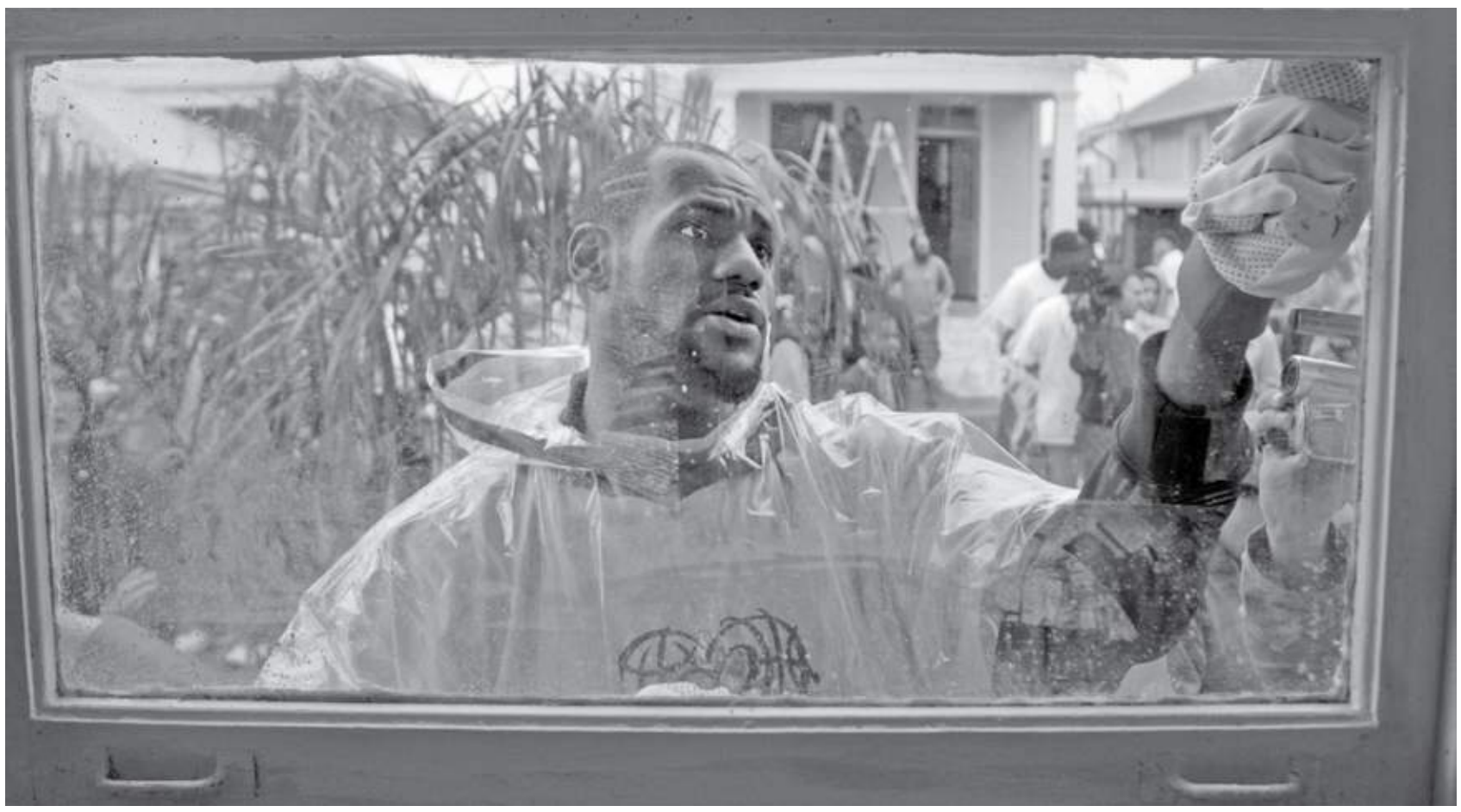

AP

NBA basketball player LeBron James scrapes paint from a window in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, Friday, Feb. 15, 2008. NBA players in town for the All Star game took a day to work on community service projects to help with the recovery from Hurricane Katrina. These players are working in the Lower 9th ward of the city.

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—As the charter bus turned right on to Lizardi Street and descended into this city's crippled Lower Ninth Ward, the lighthearted mood on board turned serious and sobering.

Through the windows on both sides, LeBron James, Steve Nash, Jason Kidd and other NBA All-Stars viewed unimaginable devastation. Suddenly, those horrific TV images and photographs burst to life.

Quaint, two-story homes once submerged in 25 feet of water still sit abandoned or boarded shut. Other houses bear the spray-painted Xs and numbers signifying rescues that were sometimes too late.

This is where Hurricane Katrina first left her mark in 2005, and where she endures 2 1/2 years later.

"I didn't think it was going to be this bad," Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki said moments after stepping outside into a steady rain. "I really had no idea. A lot of work needs to be done."

On Friday, the NBA paused from a weekend of festivities, rolled up its sleeves, threw on some work gloves and did its part to help New Orleans rebound from the worst natural disaster in U.S. history.

Billed as an "NBA Cares All-Star Day of Service," the world's best hoopsters and 2,500 league employees fanned out all over the city to help in rebuilding efforts.

Greeted by volunteers and folks from the hard-hit Holy Cross Neighborhood who stayed to reclaim their shattered lives, James, Nash, Kidd, Nowitzki, Chris Bosh and Deron Williams painted, scraped windows and attempted to raise awareness for a problem that isn't going away anytime soon.

Standing on a ladder, Nash, the Phoenix Suns' point guard whose wondrous game is devoted to the assist, was struck by the work remaining in New Orleans, 80 percent of which was flooded by the storm and when the levees failed.

"It's a great shame," Nash said. "I can't relate to what these people went through. It's devastating. To come here and see what little has been done is disappointing. It feels like the city has been forgotten in a lot of ways.

"This is not what America's about and we should look at why we failed."

In bringing its signature mid-season event here, the NBA is hoping to further New Orleans' comeback. And in the process, maybe improve its own image, too.

A year ago in Las Vegas, All-Star weekend became unruly as five people were shot and hundreds were arrested. Scattered fights broke out along the casino strip as crowds became too large to control.

Those incidents and other reports of misbehavior didn't help the league, which has done much in recent years to clean up a bad-boy reputation. By lending a helping hand to New Orleans, the NBA may be rewarded.

"I feel like we have so many good guys and we're sort of at the bottom of the list as far as how fans view us with community service," Utah's Carlos Boozer said. "Hopefully this does help how people see NBA players."

New Orleans guard Chris Paul feels this weekend can have a more profound affect on a city he has adopted as his own. The Hornets' playmaker, who has taken an active role in post-Katrina recovery efforts, sees the NBA's three-day visit as an opportunity to make an enduring difference.

"A lot of times, the All-Star game is like hit and run," he said. "But building things is going to leave a lasting impression. This should be the most memorable All-Star game of them all."

It's off to a nice start.

As he stood in front of his rebuilt home at 937 Lizardi, Jerome Richardson looked up at a small vent on the second floor.

"See that hole?" he said. "The one they pulled me out of was even smaller than that."

When the water rose more than 20 feet in the hours after Katrina, Richardson was forced to crawl into a small space under his roof. With little time to spare, he was pulled to safety by rescue workers who cut through shingles to get him.

Richardson shows pictures in a book about Katrina as proof.

"That's me, and that's Fats Domino," he says pointing to a shot of the music legend, who had to be rescued from his home.

Richardson hopes to be back in his home by March. Unlike a few others who fled, he was determined to stay on the block where he grew up, so he could one day enjoy big barbecues on Mother's Day or a neighbor's birthday.

"We can bring this back," said Richardson, who has been living in a FEMA trailer while his house is worked on by Rebuilding Together, a volunteer group devoted to bringing back low-income homes. "We can be what we once was."

As Kidd and Nash worked side-by-side painting a front door, Nowitzki and Bosh were inside using rollers to coat the walls and ceiling of a back room. The 7-foot Nowitzki is no stranger to a bucket or a brush having worked for his father's painting company during summers as a kid in Germany.

But as he slapped on paint, Nowitzki couldn't help but wonder why the city's recovery has been so slow.

"This should have been done two years ago," he said. "This city needs a lot more help than us painting the walls. But hopefully this will be educational and us being out here will help get the message out. They need all the help they can get."

About 30 minutes after the All-Stars got started, a dreary, cloudy Friday suddenly gave way to rays of sunshine—a symbolic moment on a day devoted to hope. Like the waters, New Orleans can rise again.

'NBA's Euro league idea could work'

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—New Orleans Hornets forward and Serbian Peja Stojakovic was intrigued by reports that the NBA is exploring whether to launch a five-team European division.

"That's interesting. The only thing that concerns me is the distance," Stojakovic said among the All-Star festivities on Friday. "But everything else, I think there are cities and there are arenas that can really prove they are ready to be part of the NBA."

There are other matters the league will have to explore, such as the willingness of Americans to play for teams based across the Atlantic.

Stojakovic has met a number of Americans who elected to play professionally in European leagues when the NBA didn't work out.

"When I spoke with them, they enjoyed it, especially in the good cities. I know guys who played in Greece, Italy and Spain. They had fun," Stojakovic said. "But every time you're far away from home, family, friends, it's a tough adjustment."

European crowds would also add another dynamic, such as the singing that soccer crowds are more known for. The intensity of the crowd tends to be a bit different as well, Stojakovic said.

"People in Europe, they cheer more with passion and they can't sleep when the team loses," he said. "They're kind of putting more pressure on the team and the players. ... People here, they come to the games, they support the team, they enjoy themselves. Here it's more based on entertainment for the fans and over there it's more straight basketball.

"They sing at some of the games, they do wild things, they throw things at you—cell phones, empty bottles, coins. I think the NBA is going to make sure that doesn't happen if they go there."

Stojakovic will participate in the All-Star 3-point shooting contest.

Gibson's 11 3s carry sophomores

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Daniel Gibson turned the rookie game into a warmup for the 3-point shooting contest.

Gibson made a record 11 3-pointers, many coming right in front of Cleveland teammate LeBron James, and scored 33 points to lead the NBA's sophomores stars to a 136-109 victory over the top rookies on Friday night of All-Star weekend.

Gibson will compete in the 3-point shootout Saturday, and will be hard to beat if he shoots the way he did against the defenseless rookies. He finished three points shy of the game record, set by Amare Stoudemire in 2004.

He had a chance to tie, but was short from just inside halfcourt as the buzzer sounded.

Rudy Gay added 22 points, while Brandon Roy and Jordan Farmar scored 17 apiece for the sophomores, who won their sixth straight in the series.

Kevin Durant, the No. 2 pick in the draft, scored 23 points for the rookies. Al Horford had 19, while the Nets' Sean Williams finished with 17 points and 10 rebounds.

As usual, there was little defense played. But things fell apart for the rookies when they started trading 2s for 3s.

The rookies led late in the first half before Gibson's surge began. He drilled back-to-back 3s to turn a three-point deficit into a three-point lead, then added three more over the next few minutes to give the sophomores a 55-44 advantage.

Most of the 3s came from the left side, where James had a courtside side along with fellow All-Stars Kevin Garnett, Carmelo Anthony and Chris Bosh. James rose and screamed after a couple of them, and once even walked all the way to the scorer's table, perhaps to say something to one of the television announcers.

Gibson was 7-of-12 behind the arc in the first half, tying the single-game record set by Kyle Korver in 2005. The sophomores led 66-52 at the break.

Gibson added two more 3s in the final 3 minutes and finished 11-of-20. James was still on his feet for the last two, walking to the baseline with his arms in the air in celebration on the final one.

It was a quite an improvement for many of the second-year players, who were run off the floor in a 155-114 loss last year as rookies. However, they didn't have Gibson, who emerged as a key player for the Cavs late in the season, when his outside shooting sparked their surprising run to the NBA finals.

The sophomores finished 17-of-32 (53 percent) from behind the arc. The rookies were only 4-of-9.

Mickelson leads by 4 at Northern Trust

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Phil Mickelson played golf as spectacular as the weather at the Northern Trust Open on Friday, finishing with a 20-foot birdie putt on the final hole for a 7-under 64 and a four-shot lead.

Even after starting with a 68, Mickelson felt he was close to putting his game together. It started with a 3-iron to 12 feet on the par-5 first for a simple birdie, and built momentum with a 60-foot birdie on the fifth and never slowed.

When he finished his best score ever at Riviera, he was at 10-under 132 and in firm command going into the weekend.

"This is a tournament that has eluded me," Mickelson said of the only city on the U.S. West Coast swing where he hasn't won. "The West Coast means a lot to me."

A year ago he lost in a playoff.

Robert Allenby, who won at Riviera in 2001 in the cold and rain, did OK in warm sunshine with a 66 that put him at 136 with Jeff Quinney, who made bogey on the final hole for a 67.

Mickelson and the top dozen players atop the leaderboard got one big break with the draw by playing early Thursday and in the afternoon on Friday, essentially avoiding the strongest of the wind that gusted along the eucalyptus trees lining the fairways.

For those who faced a cold wind on Thursday afternoon and more swirling breezes on Friday morning, the best anyone could muster was David Toms (68) and Kevin Sutherland (69), each at 3-under 139.

For the second straight day, not everyone finished the round.

"So there will be a Saturday cut," quipped Rory Sabbatini on his way to the 18th tee as the sun began to dip behind the hill, and players were still just making the turn.

The Players Advisory Council recommended another change in policy to a Saturday cut if the field is more than 78 players. If approved, that wouldn't happen until the Florida swing at the earliest. Otherwise, when the cut is more than 78 players, only the closest to 60 can play on the weekend, and the notorious "Rule 78" looked as though it could happen for the third time in five events.

The cut won't be made until six players finish the second round early Saturday.

With the field featuring 17 of the top 20 players in the world, five of them missed the cut, and Sergio Garcia at 3 over was on the verge of going home under Rule 78.

John Daly shot a 74 to finish at 1 over, but made his first cut of the year.

AP

Phil Mickelson reacts as a putt fails to drop on the eighth green in the second round of the Northern Trust Open golf tournament at Riviera Country Club in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles, Friday, Feb. 15, 2008.

Scott McCarron, who nearly won this tournament in 2002, had a 65 and was part of a large group at 5-under 137 that included Scott Verplank, Chad Campbell and Vaughn Taylor.

Mickelson wasn't about to practice posing with the trophy, and no one was conceding anything with 36 holes left to play on a course that was playing fast with the firm conditions.

"If Phil is at 10 under, that's fine," Allenby said. "There's a long way to go. There's still 36 holes to go and a lot of birdies out there. I've made plenty of birdies here before, so there's no reason why I can't do it on the weekend."

Quinney will join Mickelson and Allenby in the final group. Quinney made a late surge up the leaderboard, including birdies on the 12th and 15th hole.

Even so, Mickelson appears to be hitting his stride.

He began pulling away after a three-putt bogey on the sixth hole, hitting wedge to 2 feet on No. 7 and a gap wedge with the breeze at his back on No. 9 to 12 feet. After going well left of the par-4 10th, he chipped to a 3 feet for birdie, then got up-and-down for his fourth birdie in five holes at the par-5 11th.

Even stronger was his finish, which began with a par.

Mickelson went long on the par-3 16th, leaving himself a downhill chip that went about 12 feet by the hole. He made that for his par, which kept momentum on his side for the closing holes.

"The biggest shot that set up those two birdies was the par putt on 16," Mickelson said. "It kept momentum of the round going and it didn't let the round kind of slip away."

Mickelson didn't have an answer for why he is playing so well on a course that was rarely part of his rotation. He has won 15 times in California and Arizona during his career, but never on the course off Sunset Boulevard. Until last year, Mickelson only played this tournament eight times, missing the cut in half of them and never faring better than a tie for 15th.

Mickelson has said this is one tournament he wants to win, but kept that in perspective.

"I haven't won the U.S. or British Open, either, and I really want to win those," he said. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NORTHERN TRUST OPEN SCORES

Phil Mickelson	68	64	132	Rocco Mediate	75	70	145
Robert Allenby	70	66	136	Bo Van Pelt	71	74	145
Jeff Quinney	69	67	136	Fredrik Jacobson	72	73	145
Scott McCarron	72	65	137	Steve Elkington	73	73	146
Chad Campbell	67	70	137	Brandt Snedeker	76	70	146
Scott Verplank	68	69	137	Chris DiMarco	72	74	146
Billy Mayfair	68	69	137	Geoff Ogilvy	69	77	146
Vaughn Taylor	67	70	137	J.J. Henry	76	70	146
Padraig Harrington	69	69	138	Johnson Wagner	75	71	146
K.J. Choi	65	73	138	Heath Slocum	73	73	146
John Rollins	68	70	138	Cliff Kresge	74	73	147
Charlie Wi	70	68	138	Andres Romero	73	74	147
David Toms	71	68	139	Justin Rose	72	75	147
Kevin Sutherland	70	69	139	Tim Clark	69	78	147
Brandt Jobe	71	68	139	Ken Duke	70	77	147
Peter Lonard	69	70	139	Trevor Immelman	72	75	147
Bubba Watson	71	68	139	Jeff Maggert	71	76	147
Stuart Appleby	69	70	139	Daniel Chopra	73	74	147
Rory Sabbatini	72	67	139	Sean O'Hair	75	72	147
Luke Donald	68	71	139	Mark Hensby	74	73	147
Zach Johnson	72	67	139	Troy Matteson	74	74	148
Steve Marino	69	70	139	Jason Bohn	75	73	148
Fred Couples	70	70	140	Tom Lehman	75	73	148
Ryuji Imada	71	69	140	Nick Watney	75	73	148
Alex Cejka	68	72	140	Mike Weir	73	75	148
Steve Stricker	71	69	140	Shingo Katayama	77	71	148
Mark Wilson	70	70	140	Robert Garrigus	75	73	148
Brian Bateman	70	70	140	Richard Johnson	73	75	148
J.B. Holmes	74	66	140	Camilo Villegas	74	74	148
Dustin Johnson	68	73	141	Nick Flanagan	74	74	148
Ben Curtis	70	71	141	Jerry Kelly	72	76	148
Joe Durant	71	70	141	Brett Quigley	74	74	148
Charles Howell III	71	70	141	Shane Bertsch	75	73	148
George McNeill	72	69	141	Rod Pampling	73	75	148
Angel Cabrera	68	73	141	Charley Hoffman	77	71	148
Lucas Glover	72	69	141	Y.E. Yang	72	77	149
Pat Perez	69	72	141	Tim Petrovic	73	76	149
Adam Scott	73	69	142	Joe Ogilvie	70	79	149
Kevin Na	66	76	142	Davis Love III	75	74	149
Nathan Green	72	70	142	Jim Furyk	76	73	149
Steve Flesch	71	71	142	Corey Pavin	75	74	149
Hunter Mahan	68	74	142	Olin Browne	74	75	149
Tag Ridings	75	68	143	Bob Estes	74	76	150
Vijay Singh	71	72	143	Len Mattiace	77	73	150
Aaron Baddeley	73	70	143	Anthony Kim	73	77	150
Paul Casey	73	70	143	Ryan Armour	75	75	150
Ryan Moore	72	71	143	Shaun Micheel	76	75	151
Bill Haas	72	71	143	Brian Davis	74	77	151
John Daly	69	74	143	Brian Gay	75	76	151
Dean Wilson	71	72	143	Charles Warren	71	81	152
Eric Axley	71	72	143	Lee Westwood	74	78	152
Bart Bryant	74	69	143	Rich Beem	75	77	152
Jason Gore	71	72	143	Jay Williamson	75	78	153
Jeff Overton	74	69	143	Tommy Armour III	79	74	153
Craig Barlow	69	74	143	Drew Scott	75	78	153
Toru Taniguchi	72	71	143	Todd Hamilton	77	76	153
Mathew Goggin	73	71	144	J.P. Hayes	79	75	154
D.J. Trahan	70	74	144	Billy Andrade	72	82	154
Carl Pettersson	70	74	144	Mathias Gronberg	79	76	155
Ben Crane	70	74	144	Retief Goosen	79	77	156
Chez Reavie	73	71	144	Steve Lowery	79	78	157
Kevin Streelman	75	69	144				
Matt Kuchar	73	71	144				
Fred Funk	74	70	144				
Will MacKenzie	71	73	144				
Cameron Beckman	74	70	144				
Tom Pernice, Jr.	72	72	144				
Shigeki Maruyama	71	74	145				
Kenny Perry	72	73	145				
Sergio Garcia	74	71	145				
Michael Allen	75	70	145				
Briny Baird	71	74	145				

Note: *Due to darkness play was suspended. Six golfers will finish the round tomorrow.*

Failed to complete second round:

Cody Freeman	70
Brad Adamonis	72
John Merrick	71
Marc Turnesa	75
Nicholas Thompson	75
Robert Floyd	77

Indiana probes accusations against coach

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP)—Indiana's athletic director has seven days to investigate the NCAA's accusations of recruiting violations against coach Kelvin Sampson and then recommend what steps the university should take, the school's president said Friday.

"I am deeply disappointed by these allegations," Indiana president Michael McRobbie said during a news conference. "I fully understand the desire by many people for us to move quickly to bring this situation to resolution and we intend to do just that."

He said he has authorized athletic director Rick Greenspan to head a panel that includes attorneys and other athletic officials to examine the NCAA allegations. The NCAA said in a report Wednesday that Sampson and his staff violated telephone recruiting restrictions imposed because of his previous violations at Oklahoma, then lied about it to the school and NCAA investigators.

The allegations of five major NCAA infractions set off widespread debate over what the university should do next and whether Sampson should continue coaching at Indiana, which hasn't had a major NCAA rules violation in nearly half a century.

McRobbie said he does not have preconceived ideas of what Greenspan's conclusions will be, so he is not sure what actions the university will take.

"Let there be no doubt, these are serious allegations of misconduct," McRobbie said. He said officials must balance a prompt resolution with the need to be fair to Sampson and his staff.

NY Giant charged with neglecting dog

MONROE TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP)—New York Giants linebacker Antonio Pierce was accused of neglecting one of his dogs in the days leading up to the Super Bowl.

The Middlesex County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals issued a summons Wednesday.

The group said Pierce's two pit bulls escaped from a fenced enclosure in his yard on Jan. 30—just days before the game. Pierce was issued the summons because one of the dogs was found to be underweight and suffering from a respiratory illness, officials said.

SPCA chief Walt Mychal stressed that Pierce was not charged with anything related to dogfighting and could face only a fine, not jail time, if convicted. In New Jersey, the SPCA has authority to bring charges in animal cruelty cases.

Pierce and the team would not comment, Giants spokesman Pat Hanlon said Thursday.

The Week in Sports

Alegre's death stuns HANMI Cup

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ric Alegre, right, and brother Tom, center, is joined by Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands officials, from left, Tony Rogolifoi, Rufino Aguon, and Elias Rangamar while accepting an award in last year's Masters Basketball League.

JON PEREZ

Saipan World Resort's Jerryfel Mangahis, left, receives a Coca Cola gift pack and PTI phone card from HANMI league official Ruel Nava after being named the game's best player on Sunday.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, third left, and Department of Public Lands secretary John Del Rosario, fourth left, joins Northern Mariana Islands Football Association officials for a group photo in yesterday's signing of an agreement designating a land for the proposed Koblerville Football Stadium yesterday at the Governor's Office conference room on Capital Hill. Others in photo are, from right, NMIFA president Jerry Tan, secretary general Wes Bogdan, vice president Sue Knecht, and treasurer Vicki Izuka.

JON PEREZ

Aqua Resort Club's Mike Achas, left, tries to get past the defense of Hiroshi Yamamoto of Hyatt Regency Saipan in their Wednesday night's game in the 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

JON PEREZ

Rachel Rangamar of Ta Chagi eyes the ball as she prepares to set it up for her teammate in their game against Beach Jammers in the women's division of the Indoor Volleyball Winter League last Tuesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Beach Jammers' Reina Malone digs the ball in their game against Ta Chagi in the women's division of the Indoor Volleyball Winter League last Tuesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

JON PEREZ

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

The unexpected death of veteran CNMI cager Ric Alegre stunned everyone that followed his 15-year stint in the local basketball scene.

Alegre, who won numerous individual titles and led various teams to a number of championships, died Wednesday night while playing for defending champion Aqua Resort Club in the 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Aqua was playing against Hyatt Regency Saipan in the second game. Alegre, who is a former CNMI National team member, came in late in the game after finishing an eight-hour shift at the Achugao hotel.

The 39-year-old Alegre suffered in what could have been a possible heart attack. The incident happened when Hyatt called a timeout. Alegre, who is Aqua Resort's player-coach, was still discussing their game plan when he collapsed.

Police and paramedics immediately rushed to the Ada gym, tried reviving Alegre, and then transported him to the Commonwealth Health Center where he was pronounced dead at 11:41pm.

There is also some good news in the local sporting scene after Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Department of Public Lands Secretary John Del Rosario signed a land title transfer to the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs that would someday house a state-of-the-art football facility in Saipan's southernmost village.

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association officials led by president Jerry Tan, vice president Sue Knecht, secretary general Wes Bogdan, and treasurer Vicki Izuka as well as DCCA acting secretary Melvin O. Faisao were present to witness the signing.

The land in Koblerville, measuring, 8.4 hectares, will be for NMIFA's exclusive use as they begin a three-phase process of building a state-of-the-art football facility.

Japanese professional wake boarders and Saipan regulars Yoshiyuki Hatakeyama and Makoto Fujimoto transformed the waters off Saipan Grand Hotel and Saipan World Resort in Susupe into their own training facility where they practiced their butter slide, tootsie roll, half-cab, scarecrow, and hoochie glide tricks.

Hatakeyama and Fujimoto are both pro riders from the Japan Wake Boarding Association Gator Board and also competed in the 5th Annual Chagi Cup five months ago.

An eight-member swimming crew of the Saipan Swim Club left Saipan last Thursday to compete in this weekend's Far North Queensland Swimming Championships in Cairns, Australia.

The members of the eight-person team are Victoria Chentsova and Abigail Martinsen (10 years old); 13-year-old Lester Lapuz; 14-year-old Michael Moran Jr.; and 15-year-olds Cooper Graf, Sarah Johnson, and Blair Nicholls; and 17-year-old Junior Pamaran.

Vivian Lee, meanwhile, ended her New Zealand campaign on a sour note, losing again in the first round of the Wellington 18-and-under Summer Championships last Monday, Feb. 11, at the Renouf Tennis Center.

JON PEREZ

Makoto Fujimoto cruises along the waters of the Saipan Lagoon while doing some practice round last week.

JON PEREZ

Yoshiyuki Hatakeyama glides across the waters of the Saipan Lagoon.

JON PEREZ

A Beach Jammers player, left, tries to spike the ball as Nathan Chargualaf of Ma Numel'u goes for the block in their game last Tuesday night in the men's division of the Indoor Volleyball Winter League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

All-Stars help New Orleans rebound

As the charter bus turned right on to Lizardi Street and descended into this city's crippled Lower Ninth Ward, the lighthearted mood on board turned serious and sobering.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Alegre's death stuns HANMI Cup

The unexpected death of veteran CNMI cager Ric Alegre stunned everyone that followed his 15-year stint in the local basketball scene.

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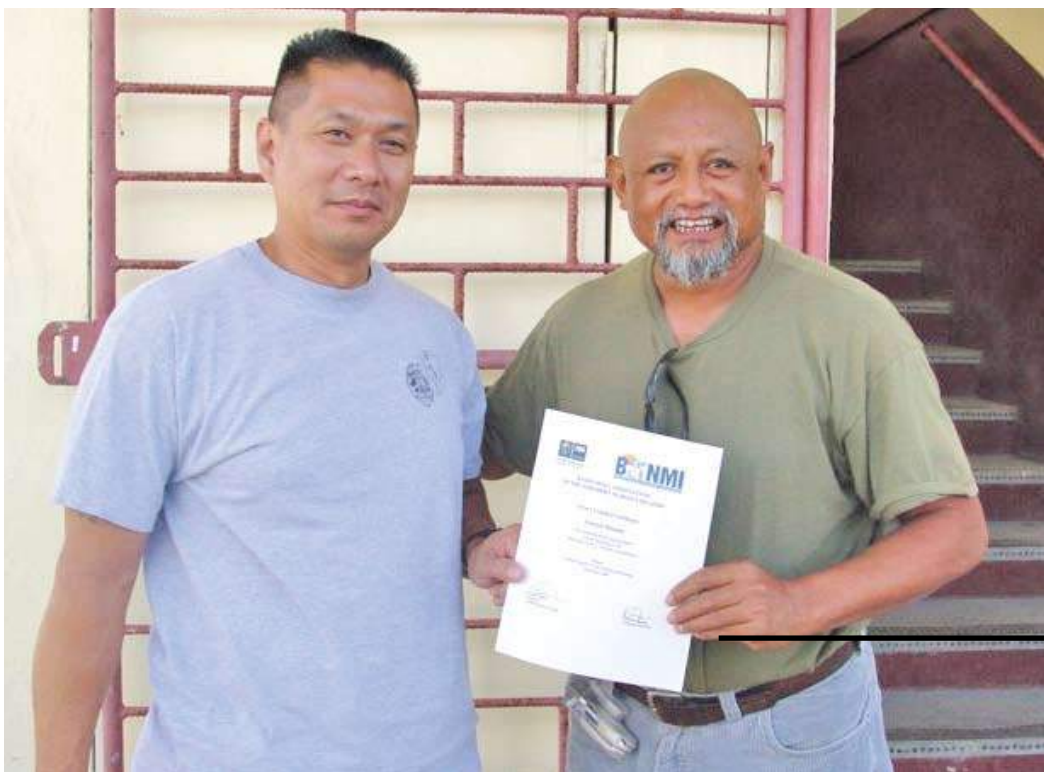
Manalili gets Level I certificate



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rock Steady assistant coach Ed Manalili, left, receives his Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands/FIBA coaching level 1 certificate from BANMI referees director Rufino Aguon.

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Long-time assistant coach Ed Manalili was awarded a FIBA Level I Coaching certificate for his untiring labor and passion in the local basketball scene.

Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands referees director Rufino Aguon, who is a Level I instructor together with BANMI president Elias Rangamar, handed Manalili his coaching certificate.

The Level I coaching certificate entitles Manalili the right and privilege to coach in BANMI and FIBA sanctioned leagues and tournaments.

Manalili became an assistant of CNMI National team coach Aguon during the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan.

He joined the National team program in early 2006 when the squad that will represent the CNMI in the Micro Games was being formed.

Aguon, who awarded the certificate during the award ceremony of the BANMI-Budweiser Cup Men's Islandwide Basketball League last week, said Manalili's hard work, patience, and dedication to basketball has finally paid off with earning the Level I certificate as his achievement.

Manalili, a police major in the Department of Public Safety, helped Aguon at the sidelines to lead Rock Steady to a league second-best 10-2 record in the Bud Cup.

Rock Steady went on to win the Bud Cup title where they defeated the Saipan Stevedore Suns, 92-78, in the finals on Feb. 1.

Manalili stood in for coach Rufino Aguon and called the shots for Rock Steady in their championship match against the Suns.

He was always present every game helping Aguon map out their game plan. Rock Steady even went on a seven-game winning run en route to claiming the Bud Cup crown. Rock Steady last lost to pennant winner Ol'Aces on Nov. 30, 92-87.

Their finals win over the Suns was also the third this season after beating the Sonny Flores-mentored squad during the regular season, 101-91, in overtime on Oct. 28 and made it 2-0 after a 98-90 decision in the second round of the playoffs on Jan. 21.

Hawk flies high in 9-ball

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Victor "Hawk" Hocog returned to form last Feb. 9 to win the Top Pool Bar Professional 9-Ball Billiards Tournament at the Garapan watering hole and sports bar.

The burly Chamorro pool ace outlasted Top Pool Bar owner Zheng Jian Qing in the finals, 4-3, to take home the weekly championship.

After the two cue artists split the first six games, Hocog broke in the last game and cleaned up the table down to the 9-ball, which he easily sunk to give him the finals win.

The championship was worth $50 for Hocog, while Zheng settled for the $30 cash prize.

Hocog started like a house on fire, blanking Jon Morris, 4-0, in the opening round. Zheng, meanwhile, had to sweat it out before beating Primo Ferrera, 4-2.

Other first round matchups saw Michael Benavente overcome defending champion Luis Fajardo, 4-2; and R.J. "Bullet" Mascarinas have his way against Robert Sanciangco, 4-1. In the second round Hocog yielded a game to Mascarinas before winning their shootout, 4-1, while Zheng joined the menacing-looking but affable Hocog in the finals with a 4-0 sweep of Benavente in what observers termed as a "dead stroke."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Victor "Hawk" Hocog, seen here in a file photo, outlasted Top Pool Bar owner Zheng Jian Qing in the finals, 4-3, to take home the weekly championship of the Top Pool Bar Professional 9-Ball Billiards Tournament last Feb. 9.

Top Pool Bar Professional 9-Ball Billiards Tournament is held every Saturday and the entry fee is $10.

The format is a race to four games. The venue's 8-ball tournament, meanwhile, has been moved to Thursday with also a $10 entry fee. The 8-ball competition uses a double-elimination format. Both tournaments follow Billiards Congress of America rules.

The sports bar is reminding interested 8- and 9-ball players that early birds get a chance to practice for free on any of Top Pool Bar's full-size billiard tables an hour before the competition.

Top Pool Bar, located along Hotel Street Garapan a stone's throw away from the Paseo de Marianas, is as spacious as it is modern and boasts of two 9-1/2-by-5-foot tables usually found in professional tournaments abroad.

For more information on the ongoing 9-ball weekly competition, call Zheng at 287-7676 or check out the competition's website at www.saipanero.com/bars/toppoolbar.

Truth Dodger Roger

OFF THE BENCH

By BOB COLDEEN

Coldeen is longtime sports journalist in the CNMI and is the sports director of KSPN 2.

Woke up the other night at 1:30 a.m. Couldn't sleep. Turned on the TV and it was the congressional hearing with Roger Clemens live. Watched in fascination for an hour and then dozed off only to wake up at 5:30 and surprisingly the witnesses were still on the grill.

The only thing proven was that either Roger Clemens or Brian McNamee lied to Congress which is a BIG no-no. One of them is a bad man. You have to pick one unless you want to wimp out and reserve judgment which is no fun. And if you say McNamee is lying, then you have to say Andy Pettitte is lying. And his wife too.

McNamee is a slimeball with a shady, sordid even, background but then who do you get illegal drugs from, choir boys?

How ironic to see Rep. Dan Burton who lied to his wife and had six affairs, and a child he doesn't support, call McNamee a liar and someone who can't be trusted.

What a bunch of yokels they must have somewhere in North Carolina to elect Virginia Foxx. The blabbering buffoon embarrassed the state by saying the hearing was a waste of time and went on to waste everyone's time with fawning irrelevance and then wouldn't shut up.

Elijah Cummings was the most impressive. If he was the hammer, Clemens was the nail. The man from Maryland avoided choosing either the Rocket or the Medicine Man by turning to Pettitte for the truth.

Who could believe the audacity of Rep. Norton to proclaim that Clemens was going to heaven? Excuse me but I thought that was God's decision.

Since when did Jose Canseco become a beacon for truth and a party at his house with bikinied nanny a source for finding justice?

Credit Clemens for popularizing the word, "misremember".

As I watched the most gripping television in a long time (since the OJ Simpson chase?), Clemens' story fell apart in four areas.

1. Pettitte's word is more trustworthy than Clemens.

2. Clemens said he was talking to Pettitte about his wife taking HGH in 1999/2000 but then said she first took them in 2003. And then the confession that McNamee shot up Debbie without Clemens knowing about it until later. Throwing your wife under the bus is something only a desperate man would do.

3. The record shows McNamee told the truth, under threat of prosecution, about Andy Pettitte and Chuck Knoblauch. It defies logic that McNamee, who would face jail time only if he lied with feds in the room, would lie about Clemens magnificently.

4. Body language: Clemens licked his lips, twitched and often looked down while talking, classic behavior of a person not telling the truth. By itself not enough to convict anyone, but in the court of opinion, it counts as part of the whole picture. Direct physical evidence may not be possible in this case but the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming.

Here's what I think happened: back then many players were taking steroids and HGH which were not against the baseball rules. Clemens was coming off a couple of mediocre seasons and looking to climb back on top of the mountain. He was part of the performance enhancing culture.

Things changed in 2005 when Pettitte asked Clemens then what he would say if a reporter asked him about steroids or HGH. Clemens started using the strategy that he would stubbornly continue until today: deny, deny, deny. Clemens had no way of knowing that the issue would heat up and boil over like this. He miscalculated and underestimated the storm. Worse, it was the Clemens camp that asked for the hearing in the first place. He would have been better off without it. Too late now. The nation was not impressed.

Pettitte will be cheered in the Bronx this year because we are a forgiving nation.

Clemens will not be cheered anymore. In the biggest appearance and largest audience of his career, he came up a loser.